

## Music Making in Alton!

In this issue, we bring our viola section to the fore and consider what opera has done for us, not to mention what we might do to it.

We also consider travel and the transportation of instruments ... and we will need more Traveller's Tales, please! And finally there is a copy of the direct debit mandate for you to use to pay your subs! As ever, we are indebted to Bruce Collins for the photos on this page, and to Jerry Cullum and Treloar College for printing Coda.

**Ellie**



Traditionally, spring has been a time when we have tried to get out of our comfort zone and this term is no exception as we see the strings at full stretch, the brass getting plenty of painful embouchure development and the woodwind striving for notes they didn't know existed. I appear to have set the bar a little too high with 'Bolero' as the stratospheric notes, particularly in the bassoon and trumpet parts, have proved beyond reach. The remaining pieces for our forthcoming concert are challenging enough – not least the *Force of Destiny* that puts the whole orchestra to the test. We look forward to a polished performance in the Forum in April, a new venue but a familiar location and a great place to celebrate our 18th birthday.

# SPRING CONCERT PREVIEW

David had clearly been studying the travel brochures when he drew up the programme for our April concert. Shall we go to sunny Italy, sensual Spain, have a trip down the Nile, visit freezing Finland, or stay at home in England? I suspect that Sophie told him it was France again, and that anyway he needed a haircut, so the concert reflects very well David's frustrated holiday plans, plus a fixation about barbers.

Now, Verdi comes some way down my list of favourite composers and it's interesting to learn that he indeed show an early lack of aptitude for music. He managed to write one piece of instrumental music but his Italian nature ensured he could pen tuneful, if rather predictable, arias for 18 melodramatic operas. Grand Opera is one of Italy's major exports and his 'Force of Destiny' Overture featured as background to the two excellent 1980's French films based upon the novels of Marcel Pagnol and set in southern France. *Aida* – an opera embroidered around a soldier's love of a slave girl in ancient Egypt – needs a cast of thousands and a very large stage which is why it's best performed in Wembley Stadium. It all ends in tears, of course.

Rossini was an entirely more subtle composer who was a fan of Mozart and understood an orchestra. In fact, he was so good, he lived on his early reputation and didn't compose anything in the 40 years before his death. That didn't stop the first performance of 'The Barber of Seville' from being hissed, perhaps because another Italian had used this same title for an opera before him. Or was it the stray cat that wandered across the stage that upset the audience? Anyway, there is much historical truth for barbers throughout Europe being musical in those days, many being accomplished players of the guitar or cittern. Actually, the original overture for the opera was lost, and Rossini quickly substituted the one we know today, which was intended for another opera – 'Elizabeth, Queen of England'. Easy come, easy go.



Sibelius was not just the man who invented the software now used by composers, but also wrote music evocative of the Finnish landscape. The Karelia Suite was formed from his incidental music to series of musical tableaux performed by students when Karelia was in Eastern Finland rather than, as it is now, in Russia.

The strings will be on home ground with Elgar's 'Serenade for Strings', which was strangely turned down by his English publisher and had to go to Belgium to see the light of day.

And David will have to be well-groomed in case 'Dulcet Tones' the female Barber Shop group, set about him.

**Chris Leggett**

# TRAVELLER'S TALES

## Jonathan Hodgett and his Tuba



Our erudite Tuba player, Jonathan, recently visited his fiancée, Mei, in Nanning, southern China for a month. A forthcoming solo engagement prompted him to take an old tuba with him, though one would have thought he could have found better ways to keep his lips in trim! Wrapped in a six-inch layer of bubble wrap, the tuba made the journey safely, although the airline managed to mislay all his clothes – giving Mei the opportunity to choose Jonathan a new oriental wardrobe.

In China, Jonathan annoyed the neighbours in the 25-story apartment block and when complaints started flooding in, moved practice venue to the local People's park, with Mei acting as interpreter, explaining what he was playing – no-one ever having seen such a brass monster before! Then during breaks in entertaining the locals, he socialised with the many Chinese musicians found dotted around the park playing strange two stringed instruments, Chinese flutes (which could be bought for only £8!) and a raucous cross between a trumpet and oboe.

The old tuba is now being stored on top of Mei's younger sister's wardrobe as Jonathan's tuba in China, to be used during future visits to the in-laws, while Mei has joined him in England to hear a lot more tuba (which, luckily, she says she enjoys)!



# Our Violas

## **Christine Collins**

I started piano lessons at the age of 6 and on leaving school studied at Trinity College of Music, followed by a Certificate in Education and then taught in south east London. For many years I played in the Blackheath String Orchestra and on moving to Hampshire joined the 2nd violin section of the ACO around 1995-ish. Since the departure of Frank, our one and only viola player at the time, the ACO was without a viola section for several years, so I decided to buy myself a viola and have a go myself! Besides the ACO I play the violin in my local four-piece village band called the Newtrons and am also part-time organist to various churches in the surrounding villages.

## **Debbie Cornell**

I started playing the viola when I was 10 years old as part of a music programme at my school – if you joined up, you got to get out of class for an hour twice a week! What kid wouldn't say yes to that?! At first, I wanted to play the cello, but I walked to school and it was just too big to manage. That left the violin and the viola, and since everybody wanted to play the violin, I picked the viola to be different – and I've been playing ever since! (I know y'all are thinking up your favourite viola joke right now, and I admit I walked right into it by saying I deliberately chose the viola because it was 'different'!) I've played on and off over the last 30 years in a whole range of endeavours, including an international youth orchestra, the University of Texas Symphony Orchestra, a baroque chamber group, a few quartets and quintets, a couple of solo recitals, the odd wedding, etc. Basically, I play whatever takes my fancy at the time – though I think I have a soft spot for quartets and quintets and would quite happily never play wedding music again! I moved to the area from Austin, Texas about two years ago and, other than the snow (which I will admit was enchanting for about 24 hours) and a distressing lack of Mexican food, I'm enjoying England very much!

## **Tony Smith**

My parents bought me a bontempi organ when I was young and I got so good at it my parents paid for me to go to piano lessons. It wasn't until I was 13, that, on the insistence of my music teacher, I took up a second instrument. I chose the French horn, but I didn't have the right lips for that. So I looked in the school music cupboard to see which instruments were available. I had the choice of viola, tuba or double bass – I picked the instrument I could strap onto the back of my bike! I played until I was 18, and then didn't pick up the viola again for 13 years until I decided that it would be fun to join a local orchestra. I work as a software engineer in the city's financial district and have two sons who love coming to the ACO concerts. Both of them have recently started learning an instrument so expect to see them joining the orchestra in a decade or so!



Debbie Cornell, Tony Smith and Christine Collins

## Dates for Your Diary

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Last rehearsal of Spring Term             | Wed 31 March   |
| First rehearsal of Summer Term            | Wed 21 April   |
| <b>Spring Concert</b>                     | <b>Sat 24 April: The Forum, Alton College<br/>(with rehearsal at 2pm, sharp)</b> |
| Summer Half Term                          | Wed 2 June   |
| <b>Rehearsal: Last Night of the Proms</b> | <b>Sun 4 July Alton Maltings 2–5</b>   |
| <b>Last Night of the Proms</b>            | <b>Sat 10 July Alton Public Gardens<br/>(with rehearsal that afternoon)</b>      |
| Last rehearsal of Summer Term             | Wed 21 July, or earlier  |
| First rehearsal of Autumn Term            | Wed 8 Sept? (to be confirmed)  |
| <b>Concert in St Lawrence School</b>      | <b>Wed 6 Oct</b>   |
| Christmas Lights in Square                | Fri 26 Nov? (to be confirmed)  |
| <b>Christmas Concert</b>                  | <b>Sat 11 Dec<br/>(with rehearsal that afternoon)</b>                            |

### Wind Group seeks new members!

**Aultone Consorte** is a wind group that was formed some years ago to play at Alton Carnivals and in particular for the bi-annual Music Box functions in Alton. We are looking for wind players who could rehearse during the day and provisionally suggest Wednesday afternoons. Please contact Helen Gardner or Les Packett if you are interested in joining. The first meeting of the group is going to be at The Quaker Meeting House in Church Street at 2.30 p.m. on Wed. 21st April. Helen's phone number is 01420 549913, email [H1063261546@aol.com](mailto:H1063261546@aol.com) and Les's phone number is 01420 85097, email [lcp1230@btinternet.com](mailto:lcp1230@btinternet.com)

# Membership

David Budd (*Conductor*)

## **Violin 1**

Mac Newton (*Leader*)

Reg Charlick

Barbara Dawkins

(*Minute Secretary*)

Nadine Farris

Sim Jones

Christine Meers

Tara Hellings

Jasmine Hellings

## **Violin 2**

Elinor Cowan (*Publicity*)

Nora Dobson

Rebecca Kiff (*Treasurer*)

Megan Russell

Lindy Wiltshire

## **Viola**

Debbie Cornell

Chris Collins

Tony Smith

## **Cello**

Hannah Folkes

Helen Harvey

Tricia King

Anna Lang

Rachel Pritchard

Fiona Turnbull

## **Flute 1**

Cynthia Buchanan

Jane Lacey

Fiona Lathey

Alison Stickland

(*Membership Secretary*)

Judith Stradling

## **Flute 2**

Charlie Bentley

Sarah Main

Miranda Whiteman

## **Piccolo**

Alison Stickland

## **Oboe**

James Cullum

Chris Leggett (*Chairman*)

Ellie Rivers (*CODA Editor*)

## **Cor Anglais**

Chris Leggett

## **Clarinet 1**

Alex Bate

Rachel Boardman

Debbie Hobbs

Alison Luckhurst

## **Clarinet 2**

Evelyn Cooper

Colin Harnett

Jean Piper

Trish Privetti

Peter Treacher

Margaret Willoughby

## **Bass Clarinet**

Graham Cross

(*Conductor Laureate*)

## **Bassoon**

Anneliese Handley

Tamsin Seymour

Clare Heaysman

## **French Horn**

Les Packett

(*Committee Member*)

## **Trumpet 1**

Barry Hatton

Martin Patey

## **Trumpet 2**

Suzannah Boardman

Lainch Gurung

Tony Willman

## **Trombone**

Richard King

## **Euphonium**

Helen Gardner

## **Tuba**

Jonathan Hodgetts

## **Sop Sax**

Sue Coulson

## **Alto Sax**

Ellie Duddridge

Don Gardner

Suzanne King

## **Harp**

Mair Cross

## **Percussion**

Chris Gardner

Melvyn Poore

# Thinking of joining us?

Rehearsals take place every Wednesday in term time  
in the Drama Studio of Amery Hill School, Alton, from 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.

The cost of joining is £5 for students and £10 for adults, per term. We always welcome new players to the orchestra – there is no audition and we do not insist on you attending every rehearsal, although we like to encourage a regular attendance. If you are thinking of joining then please contact one of the following:

**Chris Leggett** (Chairman) **01730 893032**  
**David Budd** (Conductor) **01420 549146**

## Mission Statement

The Orchestra exists to serve the local community and to provide a forum for all musicians who enjoy playing in an ensemble. We have a policy of welcoming anyone without the requirement of an audition and we maintain no restrictions on section size within the orchestra, however at the discretion of the Musical Director, we may occasionally have to operate a waiting list for certain oversubscribed instruments. The music we typically play will require someone of at least Grade 3 standard, but exams are not expected. The age range of players encompasses year 9 school musicians to retired members. We offer the opportunity for school players to stretch their playing ability.

Our music repertoire is wide and varied to suit all tastes and ranges from classical symphonies to show music incorporating big band and swing. The string section plays together and we are developing the wind section into a separate ensemble. Whatever your musical taste it should be well provided for.

The Orchestra is run by a chairman and committee and the involvement of members in organisation is encouraged and welcomed. We have social evenings from time to time and produce concerts 3 to 4 times a year. Members pay a termly fee to cover music cost etc. We pride ourselves on our friendly, hardworking approach to our music making.

We are fortunate in enjoying a close community relationship with Amery Hill School and are very appreciative of their support with rehearsal accommodation.

Come and see for yourself.

We welcome opportunities to perform locally in aid of community causes.

