



THE
COBWEB
ORCHESTRA

Silver Trumpet!

The Cobweb Orchestra 25th Anniversary Newsletter

From: nikki.k.lipinski@gmail.com on behalf of Andy Jackson, Jean Ord, Jane Halnan, Tracy Reed, Howard Roche, Lesley Wearmouth.

Welcome to this Bank Holiday 'Bumper' edition of our newsletter: we have so much to record and celebrate, that I couldn't keep it to a single page!

Let's start by reflecting on how fitting it is, in this 25th Anniversary Year, for our Creative Director, Andy Jackson to be awarded the prestigious 'Lady Hilary Groves Prize'. "Under Andrew's leadership, the Cobweb Orchestra has grown from an evening course inviting instrumentalists to 'blow the cobwebs off your music stand', to a network of nine regular groups across the North of England, and an extensive programme of study days, concerts and weekend residencies. The orchestra is completely open access and un-auditioned."

Congratulations, but most of all, our grateful **thanks** to Andy – who is featured in our interview overleaf.

With such leadership (not just from Andy, but all our past/present Group Leaders, Trustees and Events Coordinators), it's little wonder we're in our Silver Jubilee Year! We're still demonstrating our determination and creativity by developing new tactics during 'lockdown':

- WhatsApp groups sprang up to help keep in touch
- Launch of the 'Musical Book Club'
- Premier of the [Cobweb Virtual Orchestra](#) (with follow-up event recently announced)
- Other great ideas just announced in the latest Cobweb News – please support them!

Many thanks to all involved. A special shout out to Tracy for the website <https://cobweborchestra.org.uk>: packed with [news](#), [shop](#) and also reveals '[what makes the Cobweb Orchestra itself](#)' – just navigate to the 'about' page!

25th May 2020



Individual Celebration Challenge Q&A

(to compose a piece starting with only the notes present in words "The Cobweb Orchestra")

- 1) Length? The shorter the piece, the more likely it is to be performed....aim for around 3 minutes.
- 2) Percussion? We usually have timpani, and if other percussion is required, we recruit players from other sections to play. Compose so that it's not crucial if the percussion is not there.
- 3) Deadline? We won't be meeting until Autumn at the earliest, so 1 September would be a good date.

Silver Jubilee Survey Findings

Sorry, I had some technical challenges this month, resulting in a new laptop :-s So I'm still working my way through the results and trying to think of interesting ways to share them (Offers of help gratefully accepted!)

Meantime the bare facts are:

91 respondents who play these instruments:
27 Violin, 13 Flute, 13 Clarinet, 10 Horn, 7 Cello,
7 Trumpet, 6 Trombone, 5 Bassoon, 5 Oboe,
5 Viola, 3 Piccolo, 3 Double Bass, 3 Saxophone,
1 Cor Anglais, 1 Harp, 1 Percussion.

20% play more than one orchestral instrument

Collectively, they've played with Cobweb Orchestra for nearly 900 years!!

Whilst 10% have participated for over 20 years, it's encouraging that the majority, 33% joined in the last 5.

Experience of Cobwebs is most frequently described as:

- Friendly
- Fun
- Challenging
- Inclusive
- Joyful

(I especially like that last one!!)

Now let's hear from someone who has been central to all of this in our first Founder Member Feature:

Founder Member Feature #1

Andy Jackson



If you hadn't become a professional musician, what would you have been?

I wanted to study philosophy at university, but my parents thought it was a waste of all the money spent on music lessons, so I did music and theatre instead. It took me a while after university to realise that I was comfortable making a living out of music. I was a farm worker and a village postman before that.

What did you do before Cobwebs and what else do you now still do?

Apart from the farm work and postal delivery, I've tried teaching, university lecturing, working in a prison..... You name it, really. I've written lots of music and a couple of books and still do those things. I still conduct Durham Scratch Choir too, but lots of things I used to do have taken a back seat over the last 25 years. For example performing - I really don't do this often other than taking the odd trumpet solo, unless you count conducting, of course.

When you started 25 years ago, did you think Cobwebs would be so successful?

When we started, there was no idea of it progressing beyond the first 10 week course of evening classes. They proved popular, so we kept them going and they grew into Cobwebs as we know it over a number of years. It's only with hindsight, and other people's appraisal of what we do, that I've become aware of how special it is.

Why do you think it has succeeded – what are its 'magic ingredients'?

There are so many ingredients: the range of activities, our players, the wonderful professionals we work with, our dedicated group leaders, the composers who write for us, the fabulous repertoire we've been bequeathed, but I think it's the way they blend together that creates the alchemy

What playing do you do yourself?

Not enough, but I do play the guitar most days. It's a good instrument to play during lockdown as it's got a worthwhile solo repertoire, whereas the trumpet is a social instrument. I was playing trumpet in a Swing Band before being confined to the house. I also have a lovely piano which I hardly touch these days, though I did run through a Mozart sonata about a week ago.

Why did you choose the trumpet? Are there any instruments you wouldn't want to learn (given that you play so many)?

I've never had to actually learn to play instruments. I've always been able to just pick them up and get a tune out of them. I must have been about 9 when my sister brought a 'cello home from school. I'd never even seen one before, but made it sound OK within minutes. After a while she gave up playing and the 'cello went back to school, so I switched to trumpet and started taking lessons. I wanted to play like Louis Armstrong.

I'll happily have a go at most instruments and get a reasonable sound out of them, but I was confounded by the Icelandic nose flute, (and that isn't a joke, it really exists and is no fun to play). I'm not very keen on the didgeridoo, either.



You not only conduct, but compose and play multiple instruments. How much does each of these skills help and inform the others?

All of the separate skills feed into each other. I've always been more interested in being an all-rounder than a specialist.

I like being able to demonstrate a fingering on a violin when someone complains that a particular double stopping is impossible, and it's very useful to be able to sing any parts that are missing.

Which of these skills do you enjoy the most?

There is nothing more engaging than composing really complicated multi-part harmonies. I'm not sure if "enjoyment" really describes it. It's more like meditation. There is an immense satisfaction in getting it right. It's about creating order, and at that moment, when it exists as pure thought, before anyone tries to turn it into sound, it is just perfect.

How do you 'square' your love of music with what we do to it sometimes!?

I love what we do to it too, and I'm a realist.

What is your proudest achievement within your musical life?

I think the pride gene got left out when I was being put together, but I have had many memorable experiences that leave a warm glow when I think of them. I couldn't single out one, though.

What do you think Cobweb Orchestra's greatest/proudest achievements are?

In the early days, we couldn't perform a single Haydn symphony without having to stop and reset a few times. Now we sightread Mahler. I think the real achievement is that Cobwebs is constantly becoming more confident and more ambitious, but remains open to players of all levels of experience.

What do you wish Cobwebs would look like in 5 years' time?

I just hope it still exists in all its current manifestations with some interesting new bits added on and that it still gives me a warm glow.

..... 'Amen' to that Andy!

Many thanks to everyone who put forward these questions and to Andy for his generously honest replies.

For more 'gems of wisdom' from Andy, your email also includes the 'Summer 2014' newsletter from our archives. Feel free to enjoy all of it, but take a special look at the feature article on pages 7-9 'A Cobweb Conductor in Spain' by Tracy Reed. This had me in stitches as I was transported back to the rehearsal room with quotes like 'you weren't alone in being lost' or 'that's not what's written, but it's nice'!!

So it's only fitting that I announce next month's Founder Member Feature will be:

(drum roll~~~~~can you hear it??)

clarinettist, timpanist, website administrator,
Ludworth Leader: Tracy Reed!

If you have any questions you'd like to put to Tracy about her experiences with The Cobweb Orchestra, send them through to me by Friday 12th June.

As ever, please send all replies and queries to nikki.k.lipinski@gmail.com