



THE  
**COBWEB**  
ORCHESTRA

Silver Trumpet!

The Cobweb Orchestra  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Newsletter

Let the Countdown begin - 10 days to go until our Silver Anniversary and 8 days until our celebrations commence:

Please attend as many of the planned events as possible (**full details in next week's Cobweb News**). Many thanks to those of you who have already made Silver Anniversary donations. If any of you would still like to provide financial support (perhaps a pound for every year Cobwebs has existed, or for every year you've been a member?) simply make a BACS payment using the following details: A/C: 65560297 Sort Code: 08-92-99 Reference: "SILVER/your surname".

As an incentive, here's a reminder of the feelings Cobweb Orchestra evokes in its members:



**25<sup>th</sup> September 2020**



**SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER**

**7-8.30pm**

**Silver Anniversary Virtual Concert Party**

Take this opportunity to decorate your Zoom backdrop (and yourselves?!) in Shimmering Silver, pour yourself a cocktail and join Cobweb players making their own celebratory entertainment....Look out for Andy's cocktail recipe in next week's Cobweb News!

**SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER**

**2-3pm**

**Flourishing Friendships**

Accompany Iona Brown and Alice Jones in a virtual rehearsal.

At Cobwebs, we are proud and fortunate to consider these fine soloists our friends. We are so looking forward to playing with them – how else could we host such talent in our own homes?!

**SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER**

**6-7pm**

**Archive Hour**

Founder member, Howard Rocke presents some memorable moments from Cobweb's first quarter of a century: featuring videos, recordings, articles, photos and memoirs.

**MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER**

**7.30-9pm**

**Back to Beethoven!**

What were you doing 25 years ago?!

Travel back in time with the Cobwebs Founder Members, to revisit our first ever event and play along to an archive recording of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup>

## Founder Member Feature #5

### Lesley Wearmouth

*Why did you go along to 'blow the cobwebs' off your music.....what were you expecting? Has it lived up to your expectations?*

I picked up the leaflet advertising the initial 10-week course at my local swimming pool and, as I had just completed a two-year Trade Union and Labour Studies course on a Thursday evening, I was at a loose end. I thought, this looks good. Why not go along and find out the crack?

I had never actually stopped playing so have never been a Cobwebber in the true sense of the word (too late to throw me out now, folks!), as I have always played duets with my sister, who also plays clarinet. I expected that I would see Tracy there on the first night and I was right. We had known each other for years, as we both had the same dreadful, child-hating, chain-smoking (yes, during lessons!), alcoholic clarinet teacher, who had zero expectations of us and who never bothered teaching us any technique. Despite his best efforts to put us off playing, we stubbornly refused to give up.

Fast forward 25 years to the first night of Cobwebs, where we played Beethoven's 5th (a miracle in retrospect) and I knew I would go back the following week. As I had looked forward to 10 weeks of playing, my expectations have been more than exceeded with 25 years under the belt, and counting.

*Is there anything that you would never have done without Cobwebs...and is there anything you'd still like to try?*

Due to the aforementioned dreadful clarinet teacher (fortunately for clarinet players past, present and future, now deceased), his pupils never got the opportunity to play orchestral music as we were all relegated to the County Wind Band, which actually gave us a huge repertoire to play, much bigger than the orchestral repertoire as it happens.

If it hadn't been for Cobwebs, I would never have got the opportunity to play all the marvellous orchestral music, which I have listened to for as long as I can remember, as my dad was a huge modern jazz and classical music fan. I really enjoy the tricky rhythms of 20th-century music and would love to have opportunities in the future to play works by Shostakovich, Gershwin, Stravinsky and the like. Never say never!

*What do you consider to be the pros and cons of playing a relatively 'popular' instrument, such as the clarinet?*

The pros of playing clarinet have to be the varied, interesting and challenging repertoire across various musical genres and being able to take part in clarinet choir days, which offer fabulous arrangements covering the contrabass clarinet right up to squawking, squeaking Eb clarinet (earplugs optional but recommended). In addition, being surplus to requirements can mean getting to play tamps or percussion. My first experience of playing timpani was at the Sage (why did I say yes to Andy's request?), where I remember playing Sibelius on a study day with zero experience and being unable to read bass clef. At the end of the performance, a tiny, elderly, lady came up to me and said, "if I had my time again, I would play those".

Too right, love!



Do you ever wish you'd played a different instrument?

I would love to be able to play the piano, partly to be able to read the bass clef properly. It must be lovely to sit down and tinkle away on the ivories. I also love the look of the cello and the sound of the double bass.

What's the most beautiful piece of music you've played with Cobweb Orchestra?

Choosing the most beautiful piece of music I've ever played is very difficult, however I would have to plump for 2 pieces: the Miserere by Allegri, arranged by Andy, on an equal footing with George Butterworth's The Banks of Green Willow, which is hauntingly beautiful. Both pieces give me the shivers and transport the lucky listener to somewhere other-worldly and enchanting.

How much work was it being Secretary for so many years? Why on earth did you do it?!

Being Secretary for nine years was something that I never expected to do and I expect that I never have to repeat it, as it was an onerous and time-consuming role (I really am selling it for the next incumbent). However, someone had to do it and the task fell to me.

It wasn't all bad but at the minute I am struggling to remember what the good bits were. How can I forget the thrilling chat over Food Hygiene policy? Or the dark Monday nights schlepping to Bishop Auckland? Or the typing up of all those documents? Ah, happy days!



Which are your favourite 'highlights' from your years with Cobweb Orchestra (and any 'low' lights)?

Highlights are many, lowlights are few:

The thrill of our first concert in a packed church in Shotley Bridge with a lot of Sinfonia players (and a fabulous selection of post-concert cheese and crackers), performing a quartet of 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons. Playing in Tuscan churches with lots of over-emotional Italians (I know no other sort) living and breathing music written by their own composers. The first Chamber Orchestra residential on a gorgeous weekend with all the windows open and the Marriage of Figaro Overture spilling out, stopping passing walkers in their tracks to wonder where such lovely music was coming from. Playing timps in Dipton with kitchen utensils for drumsticks. Catering for 30 players in Blackton Grange and burning myself repeatedly on the unwieldy oven. Playing the Planet Suite by Holst at the Sage and watching the electrification of 2 little boys in the audience when we played the thrilling Mars. All the cakes. Playing at the Royal Opera House under the baton of Alan Fearon. Sharing a dorm in Kendal and being woken in the night by one of our lovely players, who was breaking her fast with food wrapped all in foil. And I thought I was hard of hearing! The following year, opting to stay away from the shared dorm and ending up with my car locked in a car park and me with no possessions. All the freezing cold venues and discussions about which gloves you can play a wind instrument with.

But mostly, sharing the musical epiphanies with players past and present, when everything comes together in a piece - tuning, chords, correct accidentals, dynamics.

Or to let Leonard Bernstein sum it up ... "Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable."