

# North Downs Community Orchestra and Ensembles

## Report to Members for the AGM – 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2018

The NDCOE has had another good year. The North Downs Community Orchestra and North Downs Band have been joined by The North Downs Ensemble, an ensemble composed of orchestra players with availability, often during the working day. The Ensemble, composed of generally fewer than 15 players, is able to provide community performances and visits which are usually for the purpose of 'outreach'. 5 other orchestra players have formed a wind quintet and there are currently moves afoot to form a cello ensemble.

We have continued to manage costs carefully and, as you will hear in the Treasurer's report, we have a small surplus to carry over to the next year. Numbers have increased steadily across the orchestra with some previously vacant instrumental parts now being taken. Our orchestral concerts have started to make small profits and we have also received some generous donations from 'Friends' of the NDCOE. We were again successful at bidding for and obtaining a grant from the Hazelwood Community Fund which was to help fund both the development of an adult percussion section and also for the support of the music curriculum at Godstone Village School. As our constitution is a Charity Commission approved one and this year our annual income has now exceeded the threshold for Charity Commission Registration, we will be progressing our Charity Commission registration with our new committee of trustees after this AGM.

Before the 1<sup>st</sup> AGM (2017) we had prepared our own Making Music Charity Commission Constitution and membership documents ready to be adopted at that meeting. This year we have had to re-do some of our 'paperwork', procedures and website to be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Once again the Making Music Organisation that we belong to has been very helpful with advice and we have been able to adopt and adapt their templates to our requirements. The membership forms and Information and Guidelines will be re-issued ready for the beginning of the autumn term, our Data Protection Policy and our Privacy Notice are already on our website.

With a pleasing increase in the number of members of the orchestra, we have 'grown out of' our original rehearsal venue, Endeavour, the Godstone Scout HQ. To avoid major overcrowding we needed to find a larger rehearsal venue. From September 2017 to January 2018, the orchestra rehearsed at Godstone Village School Hall. We briefly returned to Endeavour for the second half of the spring term but since the beginning of this summer term our rehearsals have been at the Oxted School which has kindly arranged for us to be charged their community/charity hire rate. We were sad to leave Godstone for orchestral rehearsals but the Oxted School provides us with a very flexible and good sized rehearsal space with off road car parking for an affordable rent. We are sorry that some of our members now have to travel further to rehearsals. Our Wind sectional rehearsals are held regularly at the Soper Halls in Caterham and String Sectionals have recently moved from private homes to the Red Cross Centre Hall in Oxted which gives more room for an enlarging string section, including the 6 cellists currently on our books.

Connections with Godstone continue though. The band has rehearsed at both the Orpheus Centre and Endeavour this year and the Ensemble has worked with Godstone Village School children.

Since our 1<sup>st</sup> AGM last May, the orchestra has held 3 concerts plus a performance in a tent on Godstone Green for the August Bank Holiday Godstone Fete and Donkey Derby. The overall standard of the orchestra's performances has improved steadily and significantly over the 2+ years of the orchestra's existence. Our Musical Director, Shona Fenion has worked tirelessly towards improving concert performances by helping members during rehearsals and string sectionals. She has selected the pieces to be played and conducted all 3 concerts. Richard Cross continues to work with the woodwind and brass players at their sectionals and also conducted the Godstone Fete and Donkey Derby performance.

On the 2017 summer Solstice we hosted two events under the banner of both the Caterham Festival and also 'Make Music Day UK' which is part of an international Make Music Day held worldwide on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June each year. First of all, a 'come and meet members of the orchestra' outreach event in the Church Walk Shopping Centre in the afternoon and secondly, a concert in the Caterham United Reform Church that evening. It was far too hot to be playing any sort of musical instrument, especially those where rosin on bows can melt, but we soldiered on and actually attracted some new members. This was a Wednesday evening concert which wasn't very well attended – a 'school night' so families didn't come along and it was also much too hot for many people to venture out. However it was a most enjoyable concert!

Much of our Caterham Festival concert repertoire was played again to the crowds at the 2017 Godstone Fete and Donkey Derby. This was very well received and gave us the opportunity to play Nick Drewe's specially written piece, 'Something's Stirring on Godstone Green', actually on Godstone Green.

Our next concert for the full orchestra was our 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Concert on 25th March 2018. This was held at St John's Church, Hurst Green and was performed to a 'full house' with an audience keen to celebrate another birthday with us. We were very pleased that our patron, Rainer Hersch, was able to join us again in our viola section. The wind and string sections each performed one piece separately at this concert with percussion accompaniment being provided by members of the other section. The programme began with Jerusalem which was accompanied by enthusiastic singing from the audience. Faure's Pavane was also played with our own member, Andrew, performing the flute solo part beautifully. This concert was dedicated to the memory of the late Nick Miller, a real gentleman and fine musician, an original member of the NDCO and player of the biggest viola we have ever seen. Although already suffering from his illness when he joined our orchestra, he valued its inclusiveness, friendliness and geographical closeness to his home and tried his utmost to be with us as often as his treatment would permit.

We were invited to play again for the 2018 Caterham Festival and our summer concert was held at St John's Church, Caterham. Though not as big as our 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday concert, there was a surprisingly good sized audience considering it was 'Fathers' Day'. After many rehearsals, we did succeed in playing our Broadway arrangement of The Sound of Music with its 12 tunes. It was probably the highlight of the concert together with a stirring rendition of our own piece, Something's Stirring on Godstone Green. As our orchestra has grown and altered, the composer, Nick Drewe, has composed additional parts for our new members. He says his pieces are constantly evolving because of the bespoke service he offers!

The band worked closely with some of the students and former students at the Orpheus Centre during the autumn and spring terms. Just before Christmas a sing along and play along festive 'concert' was held with any students and staff who wished to take part. The Orpheus Barn was well attended and much fun was had by all! The band has returned to Endeavour on Godstone Green for its rehearsals but of course Orpheus current and former students are still welcome to come along to play.

The Ensemble began with a visit to the Douglas Brunton Day Centre last July. One of the Douglas Brunton Centre members requested that we played Jerusalem – which is why we ordered the piece and have added it to the orchestra's repertoire. At the end of November a group from the orchestra was invited to take part in the St Nicholas' Church, Godstone, fundraiser – 'Tunes for a Tenner'. Tunes were needed in quantity and we were able to supply quite a few, including some solos and duets performed to the audience by our members. We were pleased to be able to help and this was a very successful fundraising afternoon with monies raised being put towards St Nicholas's disabled facilities.

In January the non music specialist year 4 teacher at Marden Lodge Primary School in Caterham invited us to come along to show her pupils our orchestral instruments and provide examples of the types of music we could play. In May we visited Godstone Village School to work with two classes during their music lessons alongside their music specialist teacher. For this we had had an arrangement of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star Variations prepared with additional parts for beginner recorders, glockenspiels, tambourines and triangles. By the end of the afternoon both classes were able to perform the piece separately with us to an audience of the rest of their school. Since then two members of the ensemble have also visited the 3 and 4 year olds in GVS nursery to show instruments, play a few tunes and accompany some singing and dancing by the children. We hope that our visits will have inspired some children to learn to play musical instruments in the future.

We have invitations from two other local primary schools and should really return to the Douglas Brunton Day Centre to perform Jerusalem for them!

To keep our wide ranging organisation going with its unusual ethos, takes a lot of work, particularly from committee members and of course with lots of help from our members! We would like to finish by quoting from the draft application to register with the Charity Commission which is being prepared by our outgoing treasurer, because I think it covers the essence of the NDCOE so well:

'We are also known as The Fun Orchestra as we an inclusive Orchestra, Band and Ensembles for local musicians who may be rusty returners or people trying an instrument for the first time.

We perform a mix of classical and easy listening arrangements such as a medley of musical songs. Our main criteria, that matches our inclusive ethos, is that all members, new and existing, are able to take part and we have parts with of a degree of difficulty that will suit our range of members ability.

We offer an outlet for people to experience the joys and challenges of playing in an orchestra, band or ensemble without having to audition or play to a high standard. There is a positive air of enjoyment, friendship and support in our group and we all find therapeutic benefit in playing our instruments with like-minded people.'

**The NDCOE committee, 10.07.2018. This report covers the period 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 to 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018**