



# Notes & Notices

City of Belfast School of Music

Issue 4: December 2009



## CBSM @ Fortwilliam Park

The City of Belfast School of Music re-located to Fortwilliam Park during July and August. The old buildings in Donegall Pass and Apsley Street had faithfully served generations of students for over four decades. The new site on Fortwilliam Park, directly opposite Dominican College, had been home to Castle High School which closed at the end of the summer term in June 2009. The buildings occupy an imposing site overlooking Belfast Lough. Having moved from a cramped city centre location with buildings that opened straight on to the footpath, we're still getting used to a wonderfully mature wooded campus with its resident ducks and squirrels. It's a terrific bonus to be able to accommodate all of our teaching under one roof and there's an amazing buzz about the place, not least on a Saturday morning when the school is bursting at the seams.



Robin Hewitt, Joe McKee and Leonard Pugh at the door of the Old Building in June 2009

We're particularly pleased that parents can leave their cars in the car park and come into the building, if they wish, either to sit in the reception area or to work in the Parents' Quiet Room next to the Principal's Office. We also now have a much more appropriate room on the first floor in which students can do homework.

Students and parents might be interested to know that we share the building with other education partners. There is a busy school meals section which provides daily hot meals for a number of local schools and a section of the first floor is home to a group of autism professionals in the board's ASD Advisory Service, previously housed at Oakwood Special School. On the top floor three rooms are in use by Studio On, a creative arts team which offers specialist courses to post-primary school pupils. Just before Christmas we will be joined by a hi-tech team on the ground floor who will look after a particular aspect of the board's administrative function. As musicians it's good now to be working alongside other education professionals and to hear about aspects of the board's activities which, in the past, we knew next to nothing about. Hopefully, too, they have a better understanding of what we do as well.

## CBYO in London.



Paul McBride & the CBYO receiving rapturous applause at the last night of the School Proms in the Royal Albert Hall.

## Minibus from Donegall Pass

At the time we moved from Donegall Pass we gave an undertaking to provide transport to Fortwilliam for those students who were timetabled for late afternoon classes. For many years, pupils from Methody, RBAI, Victoria, Rathmore, Aquinas and other south Belfast schools were able to get to CBSM in time for 4.30pm lessons.

Having a minibus transfer each day means that we've been able to continue to do this. Next year, with the benefit of being able to plan the timetable well in advance, we hope to schedule pupils from north Belfast schools into the late afternoon slots, giving others more time to travel over to Fortwilliam after tea.

## New Child Protection Policy

Child Protection is something that we take very seriously because of the nature of our work with young people. All our staff are offered regular awareness sessions and we revise our policies and working practices on a regular basis.

As part of this commitment to continuous review, we have recently produced a new Child Protection Policy.

This may be viewed on our website, [www.cbsm.org.uk](http://www.cbsm.org.uk) or you can ask for a copy from the school office. Dr McKee is available to hear comments or answer questions from parents at any time.

## Absences / Collection of Younger Children

Parents are asked to let us know in advance if students are unable to attend lessons/rehearsals. Given our duty of care, we also need a letter from home if a child is to leave a lesson or rehearsal early. It is not good practice for our staff to be told by a child that he or she needs to leave early. Unless we have an appropriate letter of authority from a parent, we would be uneasy about letting a child leave the building for obvious reasons. Occasionally parents arrive late to pick up younger children. This can be very distressing for all concerned, especially if a lengthy time elapses. Children should be able to tell our staff the mobile number of their parents so that we can call to check the reason for the delay. Please work with us to safeguard your children from harm or unnecessary distress.

# Christmas Events 2009

There are a number of musical events in the lead-up to Christmas.

## *Shopping Malls*

As part of their busy schedule of fund-raising, the CBSM Parents' Association and the Friends of the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra, will be out in the larger city centre shopping centres with a number of our bands and orchestras in the next couple of weeks. If you see any of these, please give them a word of encouragement and, better still, throw something in the plastic bucket which will undoubtedly be pointed in your festive direction!

## *Carol Party* **Thursday 17 December at 10.30am in the Waterfront Hall.**

Each year the School of Music, working in partnership with Belfast City Council, organises a huge Carol Party in the Waterfront Hall. An impressive convoy of 50 buses brings just over 2200 primary school children together to sing carols and be entertained by our Concert Band. A highlight is the annual visit by the Lord Mayor who brings a seasonal message to these enthusiastic young people. Unfortunately there's no room for an audience as every seat is taken by a good natured army of young singers, resplendent in their multi-coloured school uniforms. It's an amazing sight and a hugely daunting prospect for Mrs Eames and her team who have the unenviable task of walking on to the stage to take control of the biggest choir in the country!

## *BELB Christmas Concert* **Friday 18 December at 7.30pm in the Waterfront Hall.**

Our annual BELB Christmas Concert is one of the highlights of our calendar, bringing together the combined resources of the CBYO, Concert Band, Youth Chorale, A-freek-A! and the Junior Music Centre. This year, due to the proposed demise of the 5 Education and Library Boards, this event is being billed as the last concert of its type. Needless to say, no matter what appears in the months ahead, we would hope to be staging some form of Christmas Concert for years to come. Tickets are £10 / £5 with a family ticket (2+2) costing £20. Please note that tickets can only be obtained from the Waterfront Box Office and not from the School of Music. We hope you will join us for a memorable programme of seasonal music.

## Freddy Scott

All of us are delighted that Freddy Scott has been promoted to Executive Officer Grade based in board headquarters in Academy Street.



Freddy has been a diligent member of the administrative team with special responsibility for our finances and looking after part-time staff payments. He was also a familiar team member at our various public concerts. Although he will be moving out of the building, we still look forward to seeing him in his new role elsewhere. We wish him every success and fulfilment in his new promotion.

## In Theory, Did You Know?

Students cannot proceed beyond Grade 5 practical in the ABRSM system until they have achieved Grade 5 theory. In other words, you can't apply for Grade 6, 7 or 8 unless you can show that you've passed Grade 5 theory. This creates a log-jamb for some students each year. The simple message is this; if you're serious about your instrument you MUST keep working at your theory. It's not enough to turn up for your theory class each week, important though this is! You've got to do your share at home, either reading about specific topics or by completing homework examples set by your theory teacher. It's also important to realise that a good theoretical knowledge will greatly inform the practical side of your musicianship.

## Parents Groups

We are very fortunate to enjoy the support of two splendid parents' groups. The CBSM Parents' Association gives general support for our activities and provides valuable practical encouragement through a number of Endeavour Awards. You will see members of the committee at many of our events, often manning a Tuck Shop at the interval or organising a raffle for audience prizes. The Friends of the CBYO has a specific brief to support the Youth Orchestra, particularly in helping to raise much-needed funds for our Concert Tours. There is a very ambitious programme of annual concert tours and educational visits, mostly to Europe or the USA and, most recently, to Africa. We simply couldn't offer the quality of experience that the young people enjoy on these foreign tours without the outstanding commitment of the members of our parent groups. Both of these groups are always on the lookout for new committee members or occasional volunteers. If you'd like to help in any way, please write to Richard Furey at the CBSM address.



## Brian Overton

Brian Overton, a true gentleman, has had a huge influence as an oboe teacher for many years. Held in the highest regard as a performer and teacher, virtually every oboist in Northern Ireland in the past 30 years has had some direct contact with Brian who is rightly regarded as the double reed doyen par excellence. Brian has decided to reduce his teaching load and will no longer be working for us on a regular basis, although he intends to continue to teach a small number of students privately. We all hope that he will continue to visit us from time to time and he can be assured of a very warm welcome at any of our events.

## Examinations

Theory and practical examinations by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music play a vital part in our formal assessment of students. There is an exam session towards the end of each term. We advise students who are planning to sit GCSE, AS or A2 examinations to think carefully about not overloading themselves in the third term, especially those contemplating higher grades. We think it's a good idea for these students to get their ABRSM exams out of the way before Easter so that they can concentrate on their external school exams in the summer term. For many, of course, this must be a personal choice but we would simply ask students to plan well ahead to avoid overload at a stressful time in any young person's life.



## Billy Burns

Billy Burns, the familiar face at the front door at Donegall Pass, has retired after many years of faithful service looking after CBSM and Porters School.

Bill had a smile and a word of welcome for everyone arriving at the front door. He also had very good relationships with the local community in The Pass.

Billy seemed to know everyone by name and they all knew him. We wish Billy many happy years in retirement.



## Care of Instruments

We occasionally get requests for information about care of instruments. The best thing is for students to ask their teachers to show them how to carry out basic cleaning and routine maintenance tasks. Individual departments will offer appropriate advice. Students should not attempt to dismantle instruments or carry out even minor repairs as this can result in inadvertent but expensive damage. We have a full-time instrument technician at Fortwilliam who is available for advice or assistance. In the first instance, of course, you should talk to your teacher.

## Martin McCready & Liam Crandles

Students and parents arriving at the front door at CBSM are likely to meet either of these two gentlemen. Martin McCready transferred to the School of Music from the previous Castle High School as our Building Maintenance Officer. He knows the building inside out and has already proved to be a tremendous asset to us. Liam Crandles had worked in recent years in the afternoons and evenings at Donegall Pass and we're delighted that he has been able to stay with us at Fortwilliam. Liam is our Security Attendant and is held in high regard by those who know him for his caring manner and his sense of humour.



**Martin McCready**



**Liam Crandles**

## Instrument Insurance

The board carries no insurance for individual instruments hired by parents. Parents should therefore check that instruments are adequately insured. BELB instruments which are loaned through our hire / maintenance scheme are the responsibility of the person signing the hire contract. If an instrument is lost or damaged beyond normal wear and tear, the board will ask the person responsible for the instrument to cover a share of the cost of replacement or repair. Similarly, parents who purchase instruments for their children are strongly advised to arrange appropriate insurance cover as most instruments are easily portable and liable to opportunistic theft. Sadly, too, instruments are occasionally lost or misplaced. Please be careful; your instrument is important to you.



**Marie Fitzpatrick presenting Nicky Such (Head of Percussion & World Music) with the Fitzpatrick Trophy at the Annual Students Recital in the Harbour Office. This handsome new trophy, the gift of Mrs Kathleen Fitzpatrick, will be presented annually to an outstanding student in the Percussion Department. The first winner in 2009/10 is James Anderson.**



**Vicky Schmidt receiving the McCarrison Trophy for Musicianship from Kenneth McNally at the Annual Students Recital.**



**Jun Yu Chen being presented with the Dr Edgar Boucher Trophy (Harp) by Mr David Cargo, Chief Executive, BELB.**