



## CHAIRS' LETTER

Dear Members,

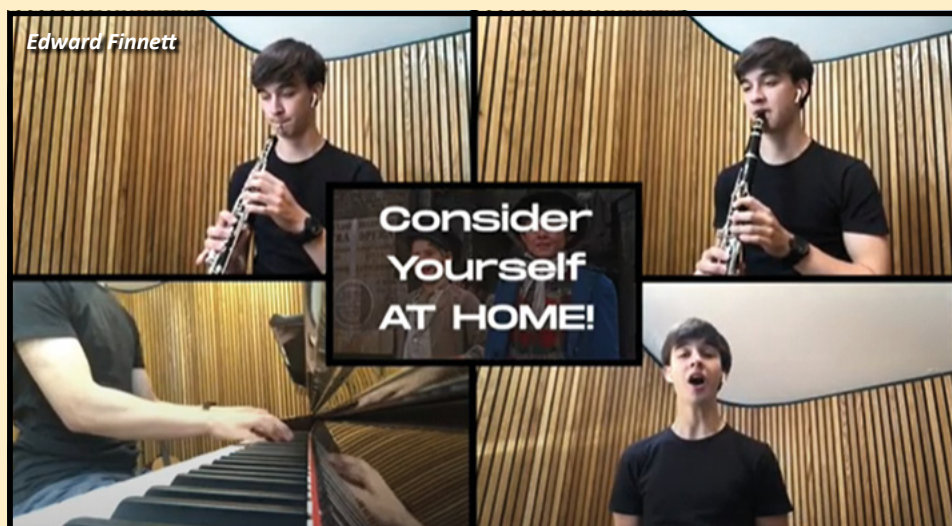
Welcome to the HSMS Summer e-Newsletter. Hopefully your sons will have settled into the 'new normal' and are raring to go!

The Summer Term started fully in lockdown, and all our usual live events culminating in the Summer Concert had to be abandoned. However, the ever-resourceful Music Department found alternate means to keep everyone involved, and its Twitter-feed developed into a well-oiled machine, churning out constant quizzes, and both past and new performances. Particular items of note were Hamptonians taking part in the Worldwide Virtual Choir and Orchestra's rendition of *Nearer My God to Thee*, with over 800 instrumentalists and singers from 55 countries; the Voices of Lions performing *He Ain't Heavy, He's my Brother* to round off the term (in lieu of their Edinburgh Fringe show) and the Chamber Orchestra playing *Señorita* by Shawn Mendes and Camila Cabello. All are available to view on YouTube and we recommend you watch them as well as the amazing individual performances posted on the school's Twitter account. Meanwhile, the Co-Curricular Music Challenge provided some much needed fun with the boys working through a diverse range of tasks to achieve as many points as possible, from

making Spotify playlists, to composing, practising, sampling, jamming, playing scales and making music vlogs and podcasts. You name it, they did it!

While the nature of the performances had to change in the latter part of the last school year the focus of the HSMS continues to be to be that of providing funds for the Music Department. Earlier in that year we donated to music trips for 1st and 2nd year boys as well as the 'Rare Beasts' programme (for musicians taking up more unusual instruments). We also purchased electric guitars and an amp for the department, and are considering donating towards a music studio. We could not do this without your support for which we thank you, and thanks also to those of you who have helped to organise the events and run the bars.

As is typical at the end of the summer we have had recent changes to the Committee Members. This year we said farewell to Janet Wood, Anne Williams and Celia Hottinger, whose dedication and hard work have made the Society what it is today. We wish them and their sons all the best for the future. In addition, after a brief and much appreciated sojourn as Membership Secretary, Catherine Cundy resigned from the post, whilst from the Music Department we said farewell to Mr. Fox. We wish him success in his new ventures.



For those who are interested in joining the Committee we have a couple of committee positions open as well as ordinary member positions. We are looking to recruit a Membership Secretary as well as a Newsletter Editor. If you would like to volunteer for these posts or simply join the committee please contact us at the following email address: [chair@hsm-scommitee.com](mailto:chair@hsm-scommitee.com).

We hope that you and your families have remained safe in these unprecedented times.

With thanks to all our members for your continuing support of the HSMS.

**Melissa Foux and Celia Lucas,**  
HSMS Co-Chairs

## National Youth Choir Virtual Course

At the start of the Easter holidays, my diary looked very empty - no 18th birthday parties, no sport - and none of my choirs were allowed to meet. To cap it all, the usual National Youth Choir (NYC) Spring Residential Course was cancelled which was very disappointing. Fortunately, the NYC decided to try something new by holding their first ever online choral course. The choir met every day via Zoom, with the objective of recording a virtual performance of *The Road Home* by Stephen Paulus. Each morning we had a variety of sessions including warmups, sectionals and musicianship workshops. We also had a career discussion with the staff members which was really interesting as well as a daily social meet with different activities including bingo,

a quiz and even a game of 'Guess Who'. It was great to reconnect with old friends and staff members and to meet new people.

After the course, we were all asked to record three videos; our own voice part for the piece, a video diary of life in lockdown and a message to someone you wanted to dedicate the song to. A few weeks later, the virtual performance was uploaded to YouTube (you can watch it here: <https://youtu.be/iwFTypYQwbA>). I was really impressed by the sound quality and how the voices blended so seamlessly. We really sounded like a live choir! It was a great experience and since then I have joined other virtual choirs and even done an online choir audition. I am looking forward to restarting singing in person together with my choirs, but in the meantime, the music making continues!

**Nick Stoner (U6)**

## Brass Ten-Piece Recording - How Mr. Ward and Mr. Ward Jr did it during Lockdown!

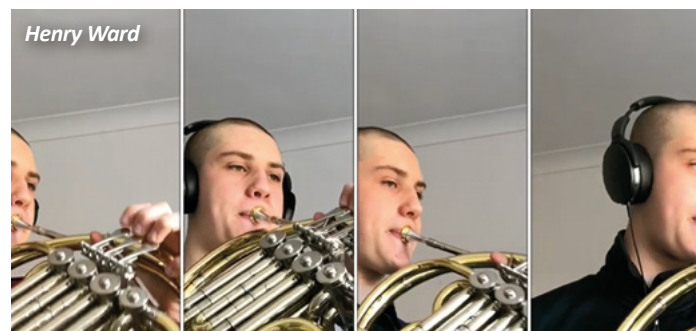
The first thing I did was email the individual music parts to each boy, along with a link to a YouTube recording of *Mr Jums* by Chris Hazel. They had all practised this piece before in rehearsals but had not yet had the chance to perform it. None of the boys had played with a click track before, so I thought it would be easier for them to play along to a recording. This way we might all have the same general feel for the dynamics and any tempo changes without a conductor. They would need to listen to the YouTube link with headphones on, and play along whilst recording themselves on their phone. Harder than you might think!

Once we had all the recordings, I poured myself a large glass of wine whilst my son Henry Ward assisted me by beginning the process of editing the audio, altering tuning and small blips here and there, as well as making sure that all the individual parts matched exactly with each other. Starting with one player, we then slotted the next player alongside and so on, making slight variations in tempo so that they all fitted exactly. Once we had the audio edited we moved on to the video images, making sure that the audio we had edited matched the footage exactly. The same process as with the audio: one player at a time.

This is a lengthy and time-consuming way to make a recording but it was the only way it could be done under lockdown as none of the players could hear each other. After mixing the finished audio, which involved bringing out individual solos, we just needed to choose a suitable level of reverb. After agreeing the sound of a 'Piano Recital Room' we 'panned' the instruments to sound as if the listener was actually in the room itself.

And there we have it - a remotely recorded Brass Ensemble piece the boys should be proud of!

**Mr. Ward**



When my Dad and music teacher Mr. Ward suggested we record a piece with the school Brass Ensemble, I was excited but apprehensive, knowing that it was my first time multi-tracking other musicians rather than recording myself playing all the parts. We sent out the individual brass parts as well as a professional recording for all the boys to record to. The point of playing to one recording is very important as, without this, the parts would not be guaranteed to be at the same tempo or in the same style. The ensemble members all played to a high standard but



their recordings were not all in tune or perfectly aligned – which is to be expected when musicians are not all playing live together.

It was my job was to ensure that all the parts followed the tempo and started and finished at the same place. To achieve this, I used 'Reaper' (a free Digital Audio Workstation) and inserted the professional recording of the piece into the workstation. I then went through each boy's recording individually and aligned it with the professional recording. Once this was done, I deleted the professional recording so I could focus on editing the boys' work! It took a couple of hours to move the odd note here and there, to ensure that the downbeats were together and, most importantly, that the last note was played together! Then came the nitty-gritty part of re-tuning the odd note by using a 'plug-in' on Reaper called 'ReTune'.

Now that the piece was all in tune and synched, there was still one part missing – the mixing! This is the stage during which we change the dynamics of certain parts in order to - for example - allow solos to stand out. Usually I would use a 'compressor' which sets thresholds so that the dynamics of a particular part cannot go below or above a certain decibel. However, unfortunately the Reaper programme does not have this function, so I had to do the mixing manually which was very time-consuming.

Next came the most fun part which was to choose the reverberation we wanted. My Dad and I decided that the acoustic of a Piano Hall works the best for a brass ensemble.

After all the audio was edited and sounded brilliant, the last step was to incorporate the visuals. I used a software which allowed me to upload the individual videos of the players and manipulated each video so they all fitted on the same page. Once I had synched the videos, I added the edited audio and a couple of special effects and the recording was done!

**Henry Ward (5A)**

## Memories of a Corona-Free 2019 Summer Term



**The Swing Band in Bushy Park**



**The Chamber Choir (above)  
The "Voices of Lions" at the  
Edinburgh Fringe (right)**

## The Benedetti Virtual Orchestra Sessions

Over a period of around three weeks in May, I participated (as intermediate cellist) in the Benedetti Virtual Sessions. During this time we prepared a variety of pieces, of which we were able to select one to perform and record. The repertoire included Warlock's *Mattachine*, an arrangement of *Theme and Variations* from Paganini's *Caprice No. 24* by the Ayoub sisters, and Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Throughout this virtual course, each day started with Nicola Benedetti's (Nicky's) 'Message of the Day' followed by creative live lessons covering topics from jazz improvisation on string instruments to classical music, as well as yoga practice. We also had sectionals on allocated days through the week. Submissions for recordings of a particular part from a piece became open shortly before the final concert. Despite many technical difficulties (because, of course, what is a recording session without any!) I managed to submit my cello part for the Vaughan Williams piece.

With the final sectional under our belts, we were all set for the big concert on the 31st May. The celebrations were already underway by mid-morning, kicking off with interactive presentations from Nicky as well as the tutors. Highlights of the concert included the performance of Paganini's *Caprice No. 24* in its entirety by a group of virtuoso violinists and an interview with Nicky and Stephanie Benedetti, including their duet performance.

Overall, the course was a wonderful experience: the wide variety of musicality that we were able to hear and learn from was remarkable, and it really helped to rekindle a sense of humanity and community that I had felt was gradually being lost during life in lockdown! I feel that I am speaking to all pupils who participated in thanking Ms. Van Ments and the rest of the Music Department for providing Hamptonians with this opportunity.

**Ishaan Das, cellist (3C)**

During the second half of May I took part in these Virtual Benedetti Sessions which were run by the famous violinist Nicola Benedetti and her team of tutors. I learnt many different tips to help with my violin technique from the tutor Andrea Gajic. Each Monday afternoon we had a Zoom call with her during which she ran through two pieces: Paganini's *Caprice No. 24* and Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, advising us how we should interpret these tunes and giving us suggestions for experimenting with our sound. We were also given additional tutorials by Andrea during the week. I had already attended one of the live Benedetti Sessions in January but I nevertheless felt that the virtual sessions were still very beneficial even though the tutors could not be physically present to observe and hear us. I really appreciated having this opportunity during lockdown.

**Freddy Liang, violinist (4B)**

## News and Information...

To keep updated with the wealth of musical performances and achievements from Hampton boys please look to the following for up to date information and images between now and the next edition of the newsletter: [www.hamptonschool.org.uk/music](http://www.hamptonschool.org.uk/music)  
Music Department can be found on twitter @Hampton\_Music and as a webpage <http://twitter.com/HamptonSchool>



## Remembering The Music Department - Six Form Leavers Write:

*My musical highlight from my time at Hampton would undoubtedly have to be the Voices of Lions trips to the Edinburgh Fringe. The experience is truly like no other: flyering and singing on the Royal Mile in the morning, performing to a packed-out venue at 2:30, having the rest of the day to explore the city and all the festival shows, and waking up to a full English breakfast - and then repeating all this for another nine days! It was a particularly great feeling to have my own arrangements sung, and I want to give a massive thanks to Mr. Donald, Mr. Roland and all the other teachers who have helped to make it happen over the years. – Max Elliott*

*It's difficult to pinpoint a single best musical moment, but putting on my first ever short DJ performance in the 2016 Rock Concert was an amazing opportunity for me, and I have continued with this hobby of mine ever since! Trips to Italy, Malta, and of course Edinburgh have all been incredible, but I would say that singing in the Royal Albert Hall with Voices of Lions, was particularly special. Perhaps my seminal musical experience was the first time I ever logged onto the Room 33 Macs and opened Garageband, back in September 2013. This was probably the point at which I knew that I would want to pursue music as both an academic subject and co-curricular activity. – Dylan Little*

*My musical life at Hampton has been enriched by the amazing opportunities to sing at many iconic venues, including singing as a chorister at the Royal Palaces, as part of the school choir at St Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Albert Hall and, as a member of Voices of Lions, taking a show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. We have even sung in St. Marks in Venice and La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. It has been a real privilege to be a part of some fantastic events with such a talented musical team. – Nick Stoner*

*Hampton music has been a brilliant experience filled with so many memorable moments - the Italy choir tour, Evensong at St Paul's and our vocal group's first performance all come to mind. However, my most memorable highlights must be my first concert (the Inaugural Piano Concert in September 2013) and my last concert (Christmas Concert 2019 when I played Grieg's Piano Concerto). I felt the latter brought my Hampton experience full circle and was the perfect way to round off seven enjoyable years of music-making. – Stephon Umashangar*

## Editor's Note:

I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the HSMS Newsletter but the time has come for me to step down officially. I would like to thank the contributors to this edition, as well as Mrs. Esser and our regular parent writers and proof-readers. I could not have done this job for the last three years without you all!



# '10 Minute' Interview

## with Mrs. Oldfield Teacher of Music



### Q: Can we please start by discussing your specific responsibilities in the Music Department?

**A:** Since the former Director of Music (Iain Donald) left Hampton in 2018 I have taken both the School Choir and Chamber Choir, which I absolutely love. We have such talented boys at the school, and I am keen to raise the profiles of these choirs and to nurture the different voices, especially the treble section. I have recently increased the number of sectional choir rehearsals before school, because I feel that this is where the boys' listening skills develop, and where they can finesse the repertoire on which they're working.

I am also determined to increase both the number of singers and performance opportunities for the choirs, and to ensure that our boys get the chance to sing a diverse repertoire, including contemporary music, a cappella and sacred repertoire. The Chamber Choir is a real force to be reckoned with, demonstrated by their singing Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral in the Spring term. I was devastated that - because of Covid-19 - the School Choirs (including Boys' Choir, Chamber Choir, Voices of Lions, Consort of Voices and School Choir) could not perform at the Landmark Arts Centre in Teddington in the Summer term. It is just dreadful how this pandemic has decimated live performances everywhere, and I cannot wait until our boys are able to make a 'merry noise' once more.

I will also be assisting Mr. Roland with the Symphony Orchestra from Autumn 2020, primarily by playing violin and helping to take String Sectionals. I hope to get in front of the whole ensemble one day! I play in as many string ensembles as I can, and love getting involved with any ensembles at the School.

However, my primary role at the school is as a classroom teacher - I went into teaching because I am so excited by my subject and sharing it with students in the classroom. I work part-time but am in school four days a week, and teach all year groups, from Year 7 to A-level. Teaching music is really quite special: it is one of the subjects where true independent learning and thinking takes place in every single lesson. I never find the teaching boring because of the diversity of topics covered and the range of skills required: it is for this very reason that the subject is so respected by top universities

### Q: Can you tell me about your musical experiences growing up, and how you decided to become a teacher of music?

**A:** I have always been surrounded by music - my father was Director of Music at Emanuel School, Battersea and is a magnificent organist, my mother was also a music teacher at Emanuel School and is a cellist, pianist, trombonist, drummer (whatever is needed...), my sister plays the violin and viola and is now a professional musician... I requested a violin for my fourth birthday, and I have been living and breathing music ever since. Apart from a 'rebellious' streak at around 16, when I declared that I was going to read History at university, there was never any question of my not studying music!

At school I played the piano and violin: I took my DipABRSM in violin at 16, and from the age of nine went to the Royal College of Music Junior Department every Saturday. My love for singing was really cemented when I went on an Eton Choral Course the summer of my GCSEs: following that I took my DipABRSM, won a Choral Scholarship at Cambridge University, read music, sang every day and played my violin as part of the Instrument Award Scheme - it was a magical time.

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher and so upon graduating I did a PGCE at the Institute of Education in London (where Mr. Roland and Mrs. Esser also studied). I find pedagogy endlessly fascinating, and am hoping to do a doctorate in education when time allows.

### Q: So, how did you come to join Hampton School?

**A:** I started my career at Eltham College, where I went from NQT to Head of Year 8, Head of Years 10 and 11 and then Director of Music. Eltham College had many similar attributes to Hampton, and I was fortunate enough to work under two amazing Directors of Music before I took over.

Following the birth of my second child I decided it was time for a change. I wanted to spend more time with my children, to move nearer to my family and to be able to continue to juggle teaching with my own professional singing and other interests. I heard about the vacancy at Hampton School and was so excited that a part-time role was available at such a fabulous place. The School is so wonderful at showing respect to all its staff and has been so supportive of my own professional music-making.

### Q: And are you still involved in music outside school?

**A:** I play violin with my local amateur orchestra - the Epsom Symphony Orchestra. My mother plays the cello in this orchestra so we perform together, and perhaps one day my daughter and son will join also!

As a soprano I freelance with London Voices, whose work is primarily recording soundtracks for films at Abbey Road and Air Studios, including *Jurassic World*, *Mission Impossible - Fallout*, *Aladdin*, *The Avengers* and *Fantastic Beasts*. I also perform and record with various choirs: the Monteverdi Choir, Eric Whitacre Singers, Polyphony, Tenebrae, Cardinal's Musick, Solomon's Knot, Tenebrae Consort, former Kings and Swingle Singers. I am very lucky that these choirs are prepared to show great flexibility to their long-term members because there are obvious limits on my time in term-time. I have sung in more performances of the *Messiah* (Handel) and *St John Passion* (J.S. Bach) than I can count. I sing in my local Church choir when I can, though more often I'm on 'Mummy' duty then while my husband sings at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy.

### Q: Do you have some top tips for pupils considering a professional music career?

**A:** I would say: Go for it! As we can all see with Covid-19, it can be an unpredictable career if you are solely a performer, so I suggest that the boys save some money to help them get through any similar financial stress. Anyone wanting to do music as a profession has to be prepared to work extremely hard, but the rewards are bountiful. Excellence and expertise are too frequently undervalued in today's society, and I cherish those who wish to commit themselves wholeheartedly to a subject they adore. That said, our boys should also be prepared to collaborate and diversify so that they are in a better position to adapt if faced with another unprecedented situation like this pandemic: explore various music, take that teaching module, understand music production, make sure you can sell yourself as a performer, do some basic coding so you can control your social media and website and always be polite at gigs!

### Q: Which contemporary musicians do you admire?

**A:** I really and truly love all kinds of music. To pick a few: Kate Rusby - one of the most important folk artists of our generation; Van Morrison for happy memories; Radiohead because they were the soundtrack to my early adolescence; the Swingle and Kings Singers because a cappella singing at that level requires exceptional musicianship and a lack of ego (listen more than you sing); Laura Mvula because she is a true innovator and feminist; Norah Jones because she writes good songs; Kendrick Lamar because he is one of the only musicians writing new music that will matter across generations; James Macmillan because he writes sacred music with the same devastating intensity as J.S. Bach; and Tim Minchin because he's so clever.

### Q: If you could only take one piece of music to a desert island, which would it be, any why?

**A:** I think this is a really cruel question, it really is an impossible choice! I guess I would take J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* because it makes my head spin and my heart sing, and I'm never bored when I listen to Bach. Plus I'd get to hear all the jazz in his music!

### Q: Finally, what luxury would you take to the island?

**A:** I would definitely have to take a radio so that I could listen to all the other music I love and endless Radio 4 comedy.

**Caroline Muller (editor)**

Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained herein, the HSMS cannot accept any liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. The views of the individual contributors are not necessarily those of Hampton School. The HSMS newsletter is an independent publication by Hampton School Music Society, written and edited by members of the Committee. The Music Society exists to support the Music Department by helping with concerts and providing financial help for special projects. If you are not already a member and wish to join the Music Society, please get in touch with the Membership Secretary through the Music Society's page on the School website.