



# Newsletter *Autumn 2020*

The International  
Music School founded  
by Yehudi Menuhin

Registered Charity 312010

## Welcome

It is hard to believe that the Autumn term is already drawing to a close. It feels like just yesterday we were making the final preparations to welcome the pupils and staff back to the site after what seemed like an interminable hiatus. For Ashley and me it felt like our Opening Night performance was finally here after months of previews, and it did not disappoint. The pupils and staff were warm and welcoming and immediately got down to business.

Obviously, though, it was not all business as usual. There were unavoidable changes to routines and schedules, and to the way both academic and instrumental lessons had to be delivered. Procedures that had been in place for years had to be adjusted, but our whole school must be applauded for their resilience, affability and open-mindedness. It was by no means an easy feat for anyone.

But, as Churchill said, in difficulty there is opportunity, and I must also



commend our team for harnessing the positives to have come out of lockdown. As you will read about in these pages, we have greatly improved our technical capabilities, meaning academic lessons can be delivered with a more innovative approach. We have found new ways to share our music with an ever-increasing audience around the world. And as an institution that was

already renowned for its sense of family, we have become even more tightly knit, bound together by our shared feeling of having made it through together what may be the most challenging times many of us will ever experience.

Of course, it's not over yet. But I feel confident that the New Year will bring open doors and fresh perspectives, and allow us the breathing room to turn our thoughts to larger questions of who we are and where we are headed.

It is a journey upon which I am excited to embark with each and every one of you.

**Ben Gudgeon**  
Headmaster



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Follow us!

If you are active on social media (or would like to be) please have a look at our various channels.

Please follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for news, events and images, but best of all is our YouTube channel which we keep updated with awe-inspiring videos of our pupils playing Schubert, Poulenc, Vaughan Williams, Howells and more. Through this channel you can watch and listen to our pupils in the comfort of your own home whenever you like.

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram @menuhinschool



Find us on Facebook @yehudimenuhinschool



Subscribe to our YouTube channel by searching for The Yehudi Menuhin School



We also update the news section of our website regularly, so please visit [www.menuhinschool.co.uk/news](http://www.menuhinschool.co.uk/news) to see what we are up to.

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Photography by Julian Andrews, Ioan Davies, Dave Greenwood, Jason Lin and Nigel Luckhurst. Edited by Sarah McDonald.

A few words from Ashley

After the frustration of beginning my tenure as Director of Music remotely, it has been wonderful to spend the term getting to know staff and pupils in person. Hearing music drift through the window every day as I busy away in my office makes coming to work a real joy, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the creative buzz that permeates every nook and cranny of this remarkable place.

Lunchtime Concerts resumed in the very first week of term and have continued apace ever since. Showcases have been held regularly in the evenings, and although we dearly missed having a public audience, the pupils have stepped up and filled the Hall with warmth and enthusiasm, ensuring each performance still feels like a special occasion.

Saturday mornings have taken a different shape to previous years and have been devoted almost entirely to chamber music reading sessions involving every child, regardless of age. This initiative has proven to be very popular, and we hope to increase the chamber music provision even further in the coming months.



As I write this, the pupils (and some staff!) are busily engaged in recording videos for our Musical Advent Calendar, and we are also starting to turn our attention towards the end of term Christmas Concerts, in which the School Orchestra and Chamber

Choir will make their first appearances of the year. So too will yours truly in what I plan to be the first of many performance collaborations with the pupils - I'll be playing alongside eight different pianists (one for each movement)

in a two-piano transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. The pupils have set a very high bar when it comes to performance standards; I'd better get practising!



Ashley Wass  
Director of Music

Please add the following email address to your email address book and 'safe' lists, as we will start using it for most communications from January 2021.

[news@mail-menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:news@mail-menuhinschool.co.uk)

Autumn Music

Cathy Whitnall, Head of Musical Resources writes:

This term we have really come to appreciate what a superb facility we have in the Hall - and also what skilled staff we have when it comes to making recordings!

At the end of the first week we put on a flash-mob style performance of Bach's famous *Air on the G String*, involving everyone who had managed to return to the School. Thanks to Tamas Reti's organisational skill, we were able to film this from several angles - and proved that however simple it might look, simple it definitely is not!

Three other performances which had been scheduled for venues outside of School were instead recorded as lunchtime concerts and then sent on; the concert for the **Wimbledon Festival** was professionally recorded by a team employed by the Festival, and the pupils involved had their first experience of speaking straight to the camera as they introduced their performances. The second concert was for our **Menuhin Circle donors**, and the third was for the **Athenaeum Club**; these will be sent to their members shortly.



Tasmin Little coaches Mariam during a masterclass

The lack of public audience brought a slight change to the **Showcase Concerts**, which were instead filmed for sending out to our wider community; the length of each was limited to about an hour and the pupils really enjoyed being a lively audience.

The second half of term has been filled with a couple of big projects - the **Advent Calendar** (which we put together in only three weeks!) and of course the **Christmas concerts**. This year for the first time we have prepared three different programmes, still with the traditional emphasis on community music-making. In addition to the Orchestra and Choir, we have a large amount of chamber music - a feature of the increased emphasis on

this part of the musical education here at the School.

In addition to filming all of these performances, many of our Senior pupils have been busy preparing audition videos for their college applications, a process that is new to them (and to the colleges). This has taken up a lot of their time and energy - and of course the staff pianists and Hall staff, all of whom have been involved in helping them to produce the best possible result.

Two events which were not so dependent on technological issues were the two masterclasses held this term. In October alumnus **Alexander Chaushian**, now a professor at the Royal College of Music, gave a masterclass in which seven pupils played, and in November the School's Co-president **Tasmin Little** gave a violin masterclass to four pupils and then coached two quartets on the day before giving us a stunning recital.



Alexander Chaushian coaches Hayden

As the term draws to a close we are at last able to allow a few members of the public into the Hall; we hope it will not be long before we are back to a full capacity audience.



## Embracing 21st century technologies



However, not all our international pupils were able to return due to flight difficulties and quarantine arrangements. This meant that teachers were delivering live lessons in the classroom while simultaneously broadcasting them to pupils all around the world. After a significant investment in technology over the summer, the School was in a strong position to deliver blended learning in the most effective way.

through collaborative spaces. Within Microsoft OneNote, teachers can set up pages where everyone can contribute as well as creating individual pages for pupils to submit tests or homework.









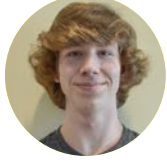








The Smartboards also bring the lesson to life. In Maths, we can move graphs and geometric shapes around the board with just a finger, and we look forward to the day when pupils can come up to the front and write on the board themselves. In Science, we can show clearer diagrams and excellent animations which really help with the understanding of more challenging topics.

**David Bruce, Director of Academic Studies, writes:**

September saw our pupils return to classrooms after having been away for almost six months, and it was lovely to feel the buzz around School.

We now have seven Smart Whiteboards which can be linked to teachers' laptops, and all pupils are able to see the lesson content and participate

## Welcome to our new pupils

 <b>Anamaria</b> Violin Albania	 <b>Bambi</b> Cello UK	 <b>Chris</b> Cello China	 <b>Dora</b> Violin Belgium
 <b>Filippo</b> Cello Italy	 <b>Ignacy</b> Violin Poland	 <b>Inés Maro</b> Violin Spain	 <b>Jemimah</b> Viola UK
 <b>Levi</b> Double Bass USA	 <b>Mia</b> Piano China	 <b>Miffy</b> Piano China	 <b>Milla</b> Violin UK
 <b>Nicole</b> Violin Australia	 <b>Sarah</b> Violin UK	 <b>Simon</b> Guitar Singapore	 <b>Slavina</b> Violin Bulgaria
 <b>Yume</b> Violin Italy			

## Duke of Edinburgh Awards

This term we are proud to have 19 very motivated pupils taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Given the current situation, we have had to be quite enterprising when thinking of volunteering roles, but have discovered some great research projects around helping to digitise old records.

Many of our pupils have chosen a project called **'Every name counts'** where they are helping to enter onto a digital archive the names of those who suffered and died under Nazi persecution.

Other students are helping with stage management or coaching music. Alasdair has recently joined an exciting project through a scheme called the **Edclub Movement** to become a mentor to children from a slum in Nairobi.

Every Thursday he makes a video call to a computer lab in Nairobi where the children gather. During the call, he talks with them and helps them to improve their English. We have only just begun this connection, but we hope to have many of our pupils helping on this amazing project in the future.

More information about the scheme can be found at [www.edclubmovement.org](http://www.edclubmovement.org).



## Boarding life

Just because we have had to stay closer to home this term does not mean that we haven't had plenty of fun. Our Houseparents have been very busy making sure that there have been plenty of activities for everyone, ranging from **baking, sushi-making, chalk drawing and pumpkin carving, to pond digging, a scavenger hunt, fireworks and walks in nearby woods.**





## This term in The Menuhin Hall



Despite the lockdown, this term seemed busier than usual at the Hall. We were fortunate to have our auditorium booked for recordings by several music labels throughout the term. When we were not welcoming guests, our Technical Manager Brian Fifield was working around the clock recording our own pupils both for **The Menuhin Hall at Home** as well as numerous virtual auditions, competitions and concerts.

This term, we also said goodbye to the lovely **Penny Wright** after 11 years as Box Office Manager. I was blessed to have worked with Penny who, together with Sian Gandhi, guided me through my first months as Hall Manager. For many her welcoming smile and enormous heart were synonymous with the Hall; we will miss her immensely but wish her all the best for future adventures.

Meanwhile, we have been busy trying to improve The Hall, looking ahead to when we can all enjoy it together. There are **new lights leading up from the car park, new bannisters in the auditorium, and new microphones** which you will have heard on our Menuhin Hall at Home series. The most noticeable change, however, is the brand new **Steinway Model D, purchased earlier this year with a generous donation from The Wallace Curzon Charitable Trust**. It is a truly stunning instrument and we cannot wait to have you experience it live in the near future.

Perhaps the most moving moment in the term came when we could finally welcome a small audience to watch our **Christmas Concerts**. As our guests left the Hall it was truly special to see the emotion and joy on everyone's faces – a sight we are excited to behold once more in the new year.

Tamas Reti, Menuhin Hall Manager

We also loved having the annual **Investec Music Festival, Linda Giles and Arts Alive**, but this time of year inevitably brings to mind the Grange Christmas Concert. **The Grange Centre for People with Disabilities** in Bookham has played The Menuhin Hall since our very own Keith Willis brought it to us in 2007. It was always a very special evening for everyone involved.

We have greatly missed welcoming all of these groups into the Hall this year but are hopeful that 2021 will bring opportunities for renewed connections with everyone who has, in the past, made the Hall their home.

## Thinking of our community partners

**Brian Fifield, Technical Manager writes:** This term, I found myself remembering the loyalty that The Menuhin Hall has enjoyed from our community partners from way back when we first opened in January 2006.

These include the many **U3A lectures** organised by Ian Funnel. Ian's U3A was the first society to call the Hall their home and would book their lectures up to two years in advance. **The Arts Society**, run by Ann Hollywood, would also regularly pack the Hall to the rafters with a long waiting list! There were many others - too numerous to mention them all but all brought with them people who became ardent supporters of the School.

I also remember the annual **Watermill Jazz** concerts, which were guaranteed to bring fantastic jazz musicians and singers to the Hall, including Stan Getz, Cleo Laine, Acker Bilk, Richard Stilgoe & Son and so many more. Those nights had many a toe tapping!

We also welcomed many local people over the years, including **Cobham Brass**, numerous choirs and **The National Youth Harp Orchestra**, to mention a few. And then of course, there were our renowned concerts for local schools, where children from the area had the opportunity to come and play, compose and interact with our pupils and teachers, and to perform live on our stage.

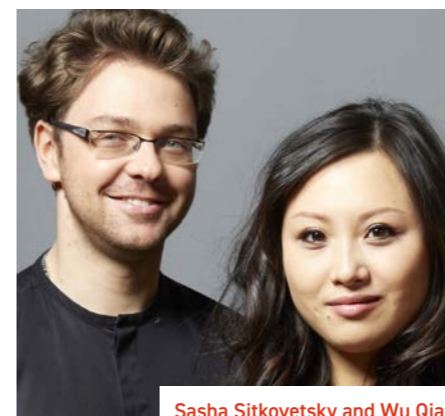
## Next term in The Menuhin Hall

It is only now that we realise how naïve our predictions were two newsletters ago as we imagined and promised a celebratory, full-house reopening in September, then January. Thinking back, the idea that this would have been possible seems strange now – yet it also shows just how much things have changed since the surreal weeks of the first lockdown. At some point we needed to accept that opening with a 'bang' was never going to be possible. Instead, we must restart our concerts with a whisper, with the slow determination of

a Beethovenian introductory Adagio, but in the firm knowledge that times will change, audiences will grow and we will soon be heading towards a victorious fortissimo.

To keep things flexible, this will be a relatively short season from January until the end of March, but with many exciting events coming up, including a special collaboration between YMS staff. **Charles Owen** will be joining our pupils for a magical afternoon and evening of chamber music in February.

**Sasha Sitkovetsky and Wu Qian** will be returning to their alma mater for a joint performance in March. We are excited to announce that these will also be the **first of our Friends@50 events, with a Friends-only pre-concert talk preceding the afternoon performances** – more information about this will be available soon. The Spring Season will close with a solo cello recital by alumnus **Alexander Chaushian**, bringing an unforgettable end to this fresh start and setting the stage for many new beginnings.



Sasha Sitkovetsky and Wu Qian



Charles Owen

## How to book

**PRIORITY BOOKING:**  
**Menuhin Circle** opens 6 January.  
**Best Friends** opens 6 January.  
**Friends** opens 11 January.

**General booking** opens 18 January.

Unfortunately, in order to ensure the safety of our staff the Box Office may need to operate at a reduced capacity, and due to the difficulty involved in handling and processing paper forms safely during Covid-19, **paper booking forms will not be available.**

**We encourage all patrons to book their tickets online at [www.themenuhinhall.co.uk](http://www.themenuhinhall.co.uk).** For more information, or if you need help with your booking, the Box Office will be open between 9.30am and 2.30pm Monday to Friday from 6 January and would be happy to help with ticket bookings over the phone.

Please keep an eye on our website for the latest updates and any changes to these plans.

## Coming up @ The Menuhin Hall

### JANUARY

WED 27 JAN 1.15PM LUNCHTIME SHOWCASE CONCERT

### FEBRUARY

FRI 05 FEB 7.30PM SHOWCASE CONCERT

THURS 11 FEB 2.30PM CHARLES OWEN PERFORMS WITH YMS PUPILS

THURS 11 FEB 7.30PM CHARLES OWEN PERFORMS WITH YMS PUPILS

FRI 26 FEB 7.30PM SHOWCASE CONCERT

### MARCH

FRI 05 MAR 7.30PM SASHA SITKOVETSKY AND WU QIAN

SAT 06 MAR 2.30PM SASHA SITKOVETSKY AND WU QIAN

THURS 11 MAR 7.30PM NING KAM AND BART LAFOLLETTE,  
 ASHLEY WASS AND DORIANE GABLE

THURS 18 MAR 7.30PM SHOWCASE CONCERT

THURS 25 MAR 2.30PM ALEXANDER CHAUSHIAN

THURS 25 MAR 7.30PM ALEXANDER CHAUSHIAN



## Alumni news

As usual, **Nicola Benedetti** has been extremely busy! Along with her Foundation, this December she is collaborating for the first time with her father Gio and his company Green Cross Training through a series of one-hour webinars to offer help to those needing mental health support and to promote healthier work and home environments. The Benedetti Foundation will be providing an additional series of wellbeing sessions for adults and children involved in music, to compliment the training GCT provides through its webinars. The Foundation will also offer wellbeing, mindfulness and yoga sessions with Elena Urioste.

**Nicola** also brought back her groundbreaking Virtual Sessions this Autumn, with the Global Violin Sessions, taking young musicians from across the world on a worldwide journey through the eyes of the violin. Nicola recorded a short piece by Wynton Marsalis, after which it was passed around four countries over three weeks – America, Hungary, Finland and Serbia – from one violinist to another. Each violinist along with colleagues in their country made it their own, and all videos were woven together to make a recording.

**SongHa Choi** was a finalist in the 2020 Lipizer International Violin Competition, in Gorizia, Italy.

In September, **Cheryl Frances-Hoad** released *The Whole Earth Dances*, a journey through some of her most personal compositions, written over a twenty-year period. She was also nominated for an Ivors Composer Award for *Bogoróditse Dévo*, *Ráduysiâ* for SATB choir.

**Nicholas Logie** has recently retired from viola playing and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Retirement and lockdown have meant he has had time to take another look at a project started many years ago - a fresh translation of Wagner's nine articles on conducting. These fascinating articles together with commentary on the fellow conductors alluded to by Wagner have been published by Fountayne Editions and are available from all good booksellers. Nicholas credits YMS and especially Anthony Brackenbury for inspiring a life-long interest in learning.

In October, **Kevin Loh** won First Prize in the London International Guitar Competition 2020 as well as a special mention for his performance of this year's newly commissioned piece "Spoor" by Phillip Cashian, Head of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music.

Kevin also won Second Prize in the Open Category of the Altamira International Virtual Guitar Competition 2020, and the special prize for the best interpretation of a 19th-century piece.



Sào Soulez Larivière

**Sào Soulez Larivière** won the Fanny Mendelssohn Advancement Award, receiving a €10,000 prize for his programme towards the production of a CD. Given annually, the award is presented to musicians who present an innovative program of repertoire that focuses on a central concept. His programme entitled 'Impression' was themed around Monet's painting *Impression: Sunrise* and features works by Rebecca Clarke, Paul Hindemith and Tōru Takemitsu.

Sào also won Second Prize and the prize for the best interpretation of the Bohuslav Martinů piece at the Oskar Nedbal International Viola Competition Prague 2020.

**Kathryn Stott** joined cellist Yo-Yo Ma for *Songs of Comfort and Hope*, released on 11 December 2020 on Sony Classical. *Songs of Comfort and Hope* is inspired by the series of recorded-at-home musical offerings that Ma began sharing in the first days of lockdown.

## Staff news

Receiving her PhD on the performance practice research of Erik Satie's piano music was the highlight of a difficult year for **Grace Gates**. The final part of the journey was nothing like she expected, with her viva conducted on Zoom. She also visited Satie's home in Honfleur to gain a sense of closure only to be greeted with the unwanted notice of the year!

Grace would like to thank all of her pupils for their support during the final weeks before submission and for their warm cheer afterwards.



Grace with her children

Former Headmaster **Richard Hillier** recently published his book, a translation of *Arator: Historia Apostolica*. The translation is preceded by an introduction which discusses the poet's life, aims and attitudes, and examines his influence on later authors including the Venerable Bede. The book can be purchased from Waterstones, Amazon and wherever good books are found.

**Rebekah Russo** left us this term to return to the US to care for family. She will be especially missed by the Friends who enjoyed talking with her.

November 2020 sees the new release on Nimbus of **Matthew Taylor's** *Symphony No 4, Symphony No 5*, with Kenneth Woods conducting the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the English Symphony Orchestra.

Governor **Veronica Wadley** was appointed to the House of Lords in the Political Peerages 2020 and assumed office in October this year, taking the title Baroness Fleet CBE.



Richard Hillier

After 11 years of looking after the Box Office (and everyone around her!) **Penny Wright** has left The Menuhin Hall and is moving to be nearer to her daughter. Penny was at the frontline of public events here at YMS and she will be greatly missed by everyone who came through the Hall, most of all the many audience members for whom she went out of her way to ensure a special experience every time they visited.

## New staff



**Victor Araujo** joined our very busy cleaning team this term. He is also taking an IT course in the afternoons.



**Liam Baxter** is our new Assistant Houseparent in Harris House. He used to work as an outdoor education instructor and male nanny, and is currently studying Psychology at the University of London.



**Arulanantham Gnanasegaram (Kli)** joined us mid-October as a Kitchen Porter. He has worked in catering for 9 years and also works as a taxi driver from time to time.



**Valentina Palmadori** came from Italy 18 years ago and has been sharing her passion for foreign languages with students since 2003. She loves travelling and exploring new countries, where she often takes part in educational programmes.



**Selvathurai Selvakumar (Selvam)** has been helping in the kitchen as a contractor for the last six years but we are delighted that he recently joined us as a permanent member of staff.



**Joanne Young** joins us as Music Administrator. She has worked in Theatre Administration and Finance since graduation from the University of Surrey with a BMus Hons. She loves going to the theatre, walking in the country and spending time with her mini-lop rabbit, Sammy.



## Sir John Margetson (1927–2020)

Among the scores of Governors who have given their skills and experience to the development of the School since 1964, John Margetson stands out, though his chairmanship lasted for only four years as he had to stand down in 1994 after suffering a brain haemorrhage. An excellent obituary in *The Times* (20 October) records his colourful and distinguished career: as a colonial officer, a spy with MI6 (where he became a lifelong friend of John Le Carré), head of chancery in Saigon during the Vietnam war, and later ambassador to Vietnam and finally to the Netherlands. He is survived by his devoted wife Miranda, daughter of the painter William Coldstream, and by a son and daughter.

Born in Edinburgh, the son of an Anglican cleric, John went to Cambridge as a choral scholar. He was an amateur pianist and jazz double bassist. In retirement he also chaired the joint committee of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, scotching a plan to combine the two institutions.

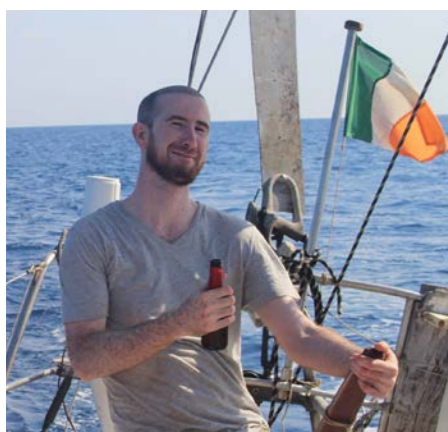
With his immense charm, gift for friendship, diplomatic finesse and knowledge of music, John hit it off immediately with my father. Before I joined the Board of Governors in 1993, John had already resolved one of the gravest administrative crises in the history of the School. He took an interest in all aspects of School



life. Modestly understating his wider contribution, he was especially proud of having overseen the introduction of sex education.

Zamira Menuhin Benthall

## Remembering Joshua Burke (1985–2020)



Alumnus David Mccarroll writes:

What to say about Joshua Burke? He was a dear friend, a fellow classmate and violinist, and one of the most brilliant and unique people I've ever known. But that doesn't even begin to describe Josh. Having grown up on a small boat sailing around the world, he seemed to be from everywhere at once, and had an encyclopedic knowledge of places, books, and music. He would always elevate a conversation and

loved to discuss ethical and political questions, could speak with authority on subjects from Sartre to the latest Radiohead album, and loved to read chamber music in the evenings after the day's lessons and practice had ended. He was also innately humorous, simply incorrigible when it came to puns, and the instigator of many pranks and counter-pranks.

Indeed, one such bizarre tradition continued long after we left School: 'The Bucket', as it was known - in truth a nondescript beige plastic washbasin - mysteriously appeared in one of our Harris House rooms. But after several rounds of hiding it in one another's rooms to be discovered, it began to travel internationally and to appear much further afield. It turned up in an incredible number of countries: Josh was served a pizza in it in the south of France, it ended up under my family's Christmas tree in California one year,

and was also discovered in Switzerland, Ireland, Wales, Germany, New Zealand, and even Patagonia. Wherever it went next, as Josh said, could always be crossed off the bucket list.

After leaving school, Josh attended the Royal College in London, but his interest in medical ethics led him to study medicine at Warwick University and begin his work in Bristol as a medical professional.

That he left us far too early is incredibly sad and hard to accept, but I am, as so many others are, simply honoured to have known him, to have grown up with him, and to have shared such important years with him.

Support and advice is available from CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (in the UK) or at [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net).

## Thank you for standing by us

Like so many charities, the School and the Hall have faced serious challenges this year, and I am so grateful for all the messages of support that we have received over the past few weeks, from our extended family of supporters and Friends. While we were not able to welcome you physically into the Hall this term – with the exception of the lucky Friends who secured tickets via a ballot to our three December concerts – you have all been very much in our hearts and our minds.

While we may not have been hosting events this term, the Development team has nevertheless been incredibly busy, seeking to provide meaningful ways for our donors to support our pupils and the School. We very much look forward to meeting up again in person in 2021!

Alix de Mauny  
Development Director



## Opening doors

A huge thank you to everyone who signed up for our first **Musical Advent Calendar** – we really hope you have enjoyed it. At the time of writing, we have raised over £5,300, all of which will help us to do what we do best: provide an exceptional musical and all-round education in a safe and nurturing environment.

We have so enjoyed putting this together that we are minded to make this an annual feature – perhaps also featuring some of our alumni next time.

What do you think?  
Let us know by emailing [development@menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:development@menuhinschool.co.uk)



## Bursary fund success

We are extremely grateful to a number of donors and trusts who have made significant contributions in recent months to the School's Bursary Fund, including a new grant from a local supporter, Mr Lionel Blackman, and multi-year grants from The Holder Family Scholarships and two anonymous couples, one based in the Far East, and one based locally.

We were also fortunate to receive the proceeds of a significant legacy, which will allow us to plan with greater confidence when we start to allocate means-tested bursaries to existing and new pupils in the Spring.

Thanks to the generosity of all our Bursary Fund donors, we are able to help talented pupils who are not yet eligible for the UK government's Music and Dance Scheme, and whose parents are unable to cover the full fees. This is absolutely central to the School's ethos and we are so grateful to all those who make this possible.



## Oak Foundation grant launches new fundraising programme in support of faculty positions

We are delighted to announce a new, five-year grant from Oak Foundation, in support of the Director of Music position. This landmark gift launches a new fundraising programme, which enables donors to invest in excellence at the heart of the School, through sponsoring or permanently endowing specific faculty positions. Multi-year grants to this programme will play a vital role in helping the School to ensure

its long-term financial sustainability, and its ability to invest in future generations of classical musicians.

YMS has an illustrious roster of music faculty, a number of whom are alumni of the School. Many of our professors also hold teaching positions at leading conservatoires in the United Kingdom and overseas, as well as performing as soloists or in chamber ensembles.

Oak has previously supported the School with a five-year grant to our Bursary Fund. We are deeply indebted to the Trustees of Oak for their commitment to the School.

**For more information about sponsoring or endowing a faculty position, please contact Alix de Mauny at [alix.demauny@menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:alix.demauny@menuhinschool.co.uk).**



## More pianos!

Not only have the Friends' contributions allowed us to purchase four new practice pianos, two other extremely generous donations have allowed us to purchase four more! Eagle-eyed readers will recall that The Wallace Curzon Charitable Trust gave us a significant grant

last academic year, in memory of Sir Clifford Curzon. This allowed us to buy a glorious new Steinway Concert Grand, which was delivered this term and has been met with delight by pupils, staff and recording artists alike (see photo on page 6). The grant also allowed us to purchase two

refurbished upright Bostons, which have replaced two ageing pianos in one of our boarding houses. Finally, two new Kawais have just been delivered to the School, thanks to the generosity of local supporter and regular attendee at The Menuhin Hall, Mr Lionel Blackman.

## New tablets for pupils

As our pupils and staff transitioned to online learning in recent months, one thing soon became apparent: a rather stark digital divide between those of our pupils who have access to a decent laptop or tablet, and those who do not.

Since we still need to offer some online learning in certain circumstances, this has had a negative impact on those whose only access to lessons (including instrumental lessons with their principal teacher) has been through a smartphone – hardly ideal for learning any instrument, never mind the piano or the double bass!

Thanks to the support of a small number of generous individuals and



trusts, as well as a grant from the Friends, the School has purchased a stock of tablets to loan out to those

pupils whose parents' financial circumstances make it difficult to buy adequate equipment.

## Support while you shop

Did you know that you can now support The Yehudi Menuhin School while you do your online shopping? We have registered with two online platforms to allow us to receive charitable donations while you shop – at no additional cost to you.

### Easyfundraising

More than 4,000 retailers on the easyfundraising platform, including brands such as John Lewis, Uswitch and M&S are ready to give a free donation every time you shop online.

Plus, once you've signed up and raised £5 in donations, easyfundraising will give YMS an extra £5 bonus donation.

Visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) to set up an account and select The Yehudi Menuhin School as your cause.



### AmazonSmile

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## Don't miss out!

We took advantage of the recent hiatus to undertake a long overdue merger between the Hall and the School's databases – an exceedingly dry but highly necessary task, which we hope will mean that we provide our audiences and supporters with ever-higher levels of customer service.

**There is one significant change for those of you who have chosen to receive news from the Hall or the School via email: please add the following email address to your email address book and 'safe' lists, as we will start using it from January 2021 to send out most updates.**

**[news@mail-menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:news@mail-menuhinschool.co.uk)**

## From the Chairman of the Friends

### Dear Friends

As I write, the Autumn term draws to a close, and to describe the past months at the School as 'challenging' would be a great understatement. This newsletter's opening message from the Headmaster gives more flavour as to the transformations that have been necessary to provide all our pupils with tuition to stretch their inborn talents. I take my hat off to the whole School community - the staff, the Leadership and the pupils themselves - for continuing to work safely and productively with most pupils resident on the campus.

Thanks must also go to all of you, who have lived up to your billing as 'Friends' of the School. Your continued interest in the pupils throughout the pandemic has been heartwarming for them and great for staff morale.

The Friends Management Committee met in November and I am delighted

tell you that the **Friends have made a donation of £10,000** to support a number of pressing needs. £3,500 will be used to purchase tablets for pupils who do not have access to any suitable home IT and so struggle to benefit from the remote learning that these days must be an integral part of their learning.

The main part of the donation has been allocated to instruments, and more information about **new practice pianos and bows** can be found on the page opposite. Additionally, several of the stringed instruments are in urgent need of care and attention before they can be loaned out to pupils, and so the Friends are contributing £5,000 to this cause.

We are also supporting the **Duke of Edinburgh Awards programme** with

Essential improvements like the replacement of well-used instruments, and upgrades to technology are all so necessary for 21st-century learning. Many of these things may be classed as 'behind the scenes' and their gains might not be immediately apparent to visitors to the Hall or School, but the pupils and staff will attest to how much of a difference they make to the day-to-day lives of everyone here. On their behalf, I thank you.

As I write, a tiny number of you will be preparing to visit the Hall this evening for one of our three Christmas concerts. Though the number will



a grant of £1,500, which chimes well with Yehudi's original vision. This donation will enable the School to

purchase some vital equipment - such as tents for camping - to enable pupils to take part in outdoor adventures.

Finally, I hope that we shall all be able to meet again in The Hall in the new year, but in the meantime, I encourage you to continue to engage with the virtual offerings.

With best wishes for a better 2021.

**John Baker**  
Chairman

be small, for us it is so significant. To be able to welcome in person even a handful of our most faithful supporters feels like a step in the right direction. Hopefully these baby steps will continue steadily into the New Year until The Menuhin Hall is filled to the rafters, and the sound of music flows freely once again.

**Ben Gudgeon**  
Headmaster

## Friends 50th anniversary - 2021

We are keeping everything crossed that 2021 will bring some sense of normality, and that we can celebrate the Friends 50th Anniversary in style!

We have some exciting plans up our sleeves, including a **Celebratory Concert and Tea**; a **'Pass on Your Passion'** event to introduce grandchildren and young family

members to the School; a series of **exclusive Friends events** across the year, and exclusive online content featuring our pupils, alumni, staff and perhaps some special guests!

**More details will follow in due course, so please keep an eye out for further information.**

### Baroque bow

Thanks to the most recent donation from the Friends, we have been able to purchase a baroque bow by Julian Clark for the violinists at YMS.



Clark was known for his late baroque bows which perfectly suit the modern violin set up with its higher tension. Playing Bach on a baroque bow with its unique camber, articulation and bounce opens up a whole world of style and character otherwise relatively inaccessible on a modern bow.

The pupils will now be able to explore a sound much closer to the one Bach would have had in his own ear, and enjoy this new adventure and sense of historical authenticity in studying music from this period. We are enormously grateful to the Friends for having made this possible.

### Practice pianos coming soon!

The Friends generously gave £10,000 in 2018/19 to buy urgently needed replacement pianos for the pupils to use in the boarding houses.

Although the pandemic put our plans on hold,

we are excited to report that four **brand new Rönisch upright pianos** (made by Blüthner) are arriving before Christmas. These will replace some of the older practice pianos, giving some of our first study pianists excellent instruments on which to practise.



## Friends Survey 2020 - results

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to our Friends Survey. Here are some of our key findings:

**90%**  
are happy with their experience of being a Friend

**97%**  
will most likely renew their membership when it is due

### Why are you a Friend?

The biggest reason is to support the next generation of world class musicians, but priority booking was also high on the list!

### What can we do better?

There are some concerns around parking, access and interval refreshments. This is not a quick fix but we promise it is on our radar!

### Priority booking

83% indicated they would be happy to book tickets online at least some of the time, and many would like the option to book priority tickets online. We are looking into setting this up, so please watch this space! For those who are unable to book online there will, of course, be alternative options available.





## Lockdown of long ago...

London 1942 was grey, grimy and bomb damaged: sand bags stacked high against walls as protection against the ferocious nightly bombing raids. Windows were criss-crossed with adhesive tape to reduce the danger of lethal flying glass splinters.

In those days there were no high-rise buildings and tower blocks, nothing to spoil Christopher Wren's vision of the view across the city when he built his 51 beautiful churches. Above the rooftops and chimney stacks, the sky was afloat with hundreds of barrage balloons. Theatres, museums, concert halls, opera and ballet were all closed, locked down as today. Livelihoods put on hold and careers in jeopardy.

Help sometimes comes from an unexpected source. At the suggestion of some enlightened people, made by the eminent pianist Dame Myra Hess, they came to the idea of holding lunchtime concerts at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. This was willingly agreed to by all not called to fight – actors, artists and musicians - they

would give their services for free. The concerts started in 1939 and continued without interruption until long after peace was declared.

One day in early spring 1942, a small girl and her mother climbed the steps to the National Gallery to hear a lunchtime concert by Dame Myra Hess. Tickets were one shilling: a cup of tea and a sandwich could be bought beforehand for ten pence. The Gallery felt huge and empty and colourless since all the treasured paintings have been spirited away to a secret location far away in disused slate mine in North Wales. The small gallery for the recital was empty and away from the recent bomb damage which the Gallery had suffered on several occasions. There was a plain wooden platform, a beautiful Steinway piano and rows of uncomfortable chairs. Myra Hess was to play a programme of Bach and Beethoven. This quiet unassuming woman played with such a calm intensity, devoid of mannerisms or histrionics. The audience was transported to another world, away

from the fear, cruelty and destruction of war.

The young girl listened intently, as she had always done (she had played piano since she was four). The performance made a deep impression on her which she carried all her life. Little did she know at the time that seven years later, as a student at the Royal Academy of Music, she would play Bach to Dame Myra Hess on several occasions when she came to hear some of the students.

As the war wound on to its inglorious conclusion and more and more horrors came to light, it became clear that music and musicians had been of immense importance under the most inhumane conditions, in some cases saving lives.

That is how it was – now, almost 80 years later, that is how it is... plus ça change.

**Jill Severs**  
Former YMS Harpsichord Teacher