

Music Director's Report Risingholme Orchestra for the year ending 1 March 2022.

It is with great pleasure that I present my seventh report as Music Director of Risingholme Orchestra.

Despite the onset of Covid early in 2021, we were still able to present two concerts in the year. This was due to the fact that we had programmed three concerts, and that by good fortune we had scheduled them for times New Zealand happened to be free of Covid.

The first of the two concerts was an extraordinary project in both senses of the word. It was held at The Piano on 11 April, with two back-to-back matinees (2pm and 4pm), and comprised what was possibly the Australasian premiere of a hot-off-the-press composition by best-selling 'Da Vinci Code' author Dan Brown. Brown, in his earlier years, had been a teacher of music and he composed his *Wild Symphony* as a young persons' introduction to the orchestra. His music was released in tandem with the publication of a picture book in which he had written poems about animals. Each poem, about a particular animal, could be matched to a pre-recorded version of the relevant *Wild Symphony* movement through the miracles of technology and ownership of a smart phone.

For the concerts, the orchestra were invited to bring along soft toy animals to help decorate the stage. Thanks to the ingenuity of Ross Gurney, we also had matching visuals projected onto the backdrop of a screen. It was the most visually splendid concert Risingholme Orchestra had undertaken to date. We also managed to sell 100 copies of Dan Brown's book which not only helped boost his coffers but ours as well.

We also included a performance of *Wild Symphony* at a primary school, Linwood Avenue School. The respectful and enthusiastic reception we were given there would rate amongst the most satisfying school visits Risingholme Orchestra has undertaken.

Our mid-year concert, *Vive la France* was the French equivalent of our successful *Viva Italia* celebration of Italian music in 2020. It attracted a near full house, thanks to attractive posters by Kate McSweeney, strong publicity at Retirement Villages, especially by Philippa Graham at Alpine View, a link-in with the French Society and residual goodwill from our *Viva Italia* enterprise.

Once more, visual splendour enhanced the success of the programme, with players dressing in French colours (red white and blue) and the hanging of French flags above the stage.

Also aiding success were a talented line-up of guest artists – Samantha Warhurst and Sarah-Jane Rennie sopranos, Peter Hind baritone, Karl Margevka trombone (a surprise guest for 'Plasir d'Amour'), Sophia Bidwell on piano accordion and Kate Taylor, jazz vocalist. The programme included a work composed especially for the orchestra by Auckland composer Warwick Blair called *She* – a deconstruction of the song made famous by Charles Aznavour.

Later in the month, we presented highlights of Vive la France in a Thursday morning free concert at the Sports Bar of Woolston Club, performing to a selection of invited guests, principally from rest homes, but also friends of the Woolston Club.

Our planned third concert was a musical portrait of Sir Arthur Sullivan. With Covid looming large in November 2021 we decided to postpone the performance until February 2022. Unfortunately the Omicron variety of Covid then took hold of the country and we cancelled the concert. Hopefully we can remount it in 2023.

A large proportion of committee time has been taken up over the last year devising contingency plans for concerts and tackling the realities of music rehearsal and performance in the time of a pandemic. With this in mind, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and work ethic of our committee.

A big thanks is due to our outgoing president Leane Gurney and committee member Ross Gurney for ensuring *Wild Symphony* was such a success. The incoming officers of Pauline Sewell (President) Tonya Sadler (Vice-President) Claire Hobbs secretary and Carmel Harris (treasurer) picked up the relay baton and ensured a smooth transition, assisted by committee members Kate McSweeney, Julie Hutton, Terry Williams, Margaret Hunt, Linda Sorensen, and co-opted members Philippa Graham and Paul Goodson. That so much of our time has been taken up with postponing or cancelling concerts and rehearsals could have been dispiriting, but morale remained high, with no-one doubting that we will eventually return to full activity. Thank you all for your positivity.

A special thanks as ever to our leader Amandine Guerin, who not only keeps me on my toes but also reminds me that music is not music if it doesn't have dynamics. Amandine, it is a pleasure to work with you and your continuing presence and expertise lifts our collective capabilities considerably.

And lastly, a special acknowledgement to Linda Sorensen, without whose service as a music librarian we would either be improvising or playing from memory. Thank you for sourcing and providing us with the music we play, and especially for running the extra distances involved with such cheerfulness in these days when postponements seem to outnumber performances.



Philip Norman
Musical Director
Risingholme Orchestra
13 April 2022