

Lions Youth Brass Musical Directors Report Nigel Birch

2009 has once again been a very successful year for Lions Youth Brass, with some great concerts, contest results and a great tour of Spain.

The year started with a runners-up position at The Gwent Festival, and although we were extremely unlucky not to retain the trophy we won in 2008, second was still an excellent result. There were excellent solo performances from Neil Raisbeck and Tim Bartley and an all round good solid performance from the whole band.

In April, the band had an excellent third place at The National Championships in Manchester. For this, we commissioned Andy Scott, who is composer in residence with The Fodens Band and our own composer in residence, Ian Raisbeck, to write new compositions for the band, which were premiered in the competition. There were two excellent solo performances by Neil Raisbeck and Alex Holsgrove, and it was the excellent performance of the test-piece, The Pioneers, plus the originality of the program, that gained a well-deserved top three finish. This is now the fourth time in eight years that the band have finished in the top three at the premier youth competition, which is a record for all of us to be proud of.

On the concert platform, the band remains in very high demand and I must commend all my players for the level of consistency shown over so many concerts. The performance with Fodens at Congleton was outstanding. We also extended our visual presentation and this is something that is now an integral part of our performance.

In July we had another great trip to Spain, superbly organised by Jane Stubbs. We were very well received by the Spanish public and all who attended the concerts appreciated our varied program of music.

Following tour, we said goodbye to some of our long serving players, Sarah Allcock, Danielle Unwin, Leanne Withnell and Matthew Darlington. I would like to thank all of them for their dedication to Lions Youth Brass over a long period of time. In particular to Danielle for her excellent work as band representative and to Matthew Darlington in his role as Principal Cornet, one of which he performed with great distinction. I was absolutely delighted that Matthew decided to take on a tutorial role within the beginners section and he is already proving to be a real asset in that area of our organisation.

2009 was also a year when we enhanced our links with the very best musicians in the brass band movement. David Thornton, Principal Euphonium of The Black Dyke Band, continues to be the Youth Bands Musical Associate, and his advice to the players and myself is invaluable. We also enhanced our association with The Fodens Band with the appointment of Les Neish as Tuba Consultant. This has already resulted in three players now moving on to Tuba.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my fellow musical directors and tutors who have worked extremely hard within their own bands and who continue to develop the younger players within our organisation and I wish them all the best of luck when they compete in the Training Section at The National Championships in April. This will be a landmark occasion when we will have our entire organisation playing in the Nationals on the same day.

I would like to thank all the parents, grandparents and friends who continue to support all the players of all bands, which without their support it would not be possible to function in the manner in which we are able to.

I would like to thank all my players for their commitment to the Youth Band this year. I know I demand a lot from my players in terms of dedication and performance, but when you get the end result right it is worth the effort that is made by all of us.

I would like to say a big, big thank you to our fantastic committee, superbly led by Jane Stubbs, who put in a tremendous amount of work all year round to ensure that all the bands have the best opportunities possible. We all see them on a Tuesday performing their various tasks, but it is the work on the other six days of the week that we do not see that is vital to the running of our organisation.

I would like to propose that they all be re-elected for the next 12 months.

We have had a great start to 2010 with a superb performance at Butlins and a great second place. In March we will have a workshop with Fodens to help prepare us for the Nationals. In June we have a concert with Black Dyke to look forward to and in July we will return to Spain for our third consecutive tour of Spain. To end a hectic term, there will be the recording of our latest compact disc.

Thanks to you all for a great 2009 and I look forward to the next 12 months with great optimism one which I am sure will be very eventful and successful.

NC Birch