

# ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

I WONDER HOW MANY LIVERYMEN, though undoubtedly there will be some, are really aware of how winners of the WCM's major prizes may have developed their talents? Through basic ability, good fortune and much hard work, yes, excellent teaching too, most commonly via one or other of the UK Music Colleges/conservatories. Yet since becoming Director of the Junior Department, RCM in 1990, I have become increasingly aware of how little is generally known about pre-College training.

While there are other routes than that I represent, your formidably persistent editors, both of whom have become great supporters of our work and to whom I am very grateful for this opportunity, have persuaded me to say something of the RCM's particular contribution.

Those who visit the Junior Department for the first time will discover at our concerts something of the tremendous activity and very high standards of music making achieved by the young age group (8-18 year olds) we cater for, often at a level the envy of undergraduates at music colleges. Our 300 talented students travel each week from all over the UK (even Eire) on Saturdays (not merely mornings but usually 9-5) for a rigorous and intensive programme of study which centres on a first study instrument lesson (or composition/voice) supported by 2nd study, Musicianship and Choral, Orchestral and Chamber Music training. Entrance is by competitive audition and students work with some of the finest teachers and tutors available, many of whom are leading performers (and WCM medallists) and a significant number of whom are also professors at Senior College.

During their time with us students gain a really thorough technical and musical grounding on their chosen instrument and have much opportunity to perform. Each Saturday we host a Performers Platform for individuals. There are numerous internal competitions (a mixed blessing perhaps), and each term the many chamber ensembles, 5 orchestra, 4 choirs, early music groups, jazz, electroacoustic and composers ensembles etc., give public performances at College. They are also encouraged to contribute fully to their school and home musical communities during the week. This is perhaps the most profound difference between our pattern of training and that of the residential Specialist Music Schools, the

By Liveryman Peter Hewitt



benefit of the finest tuition environment while living at home with family and attending local schools. It might be of interest to note that a granddaughter of Victor Allcard is a current JD student.

Our success can be measured in various ways. I suggest that the quality of our orchestra, ensemble and solo performances speak for themselves. (Recent concerts at RCM, St: John Smith Square, St. Albans Abbey and in Paris – the latter to packed audiences – have been given ecstatic receptions: more regional finalists than from any other single institution in the current Audi Young Musician Competition attended RCM JD: several recent gold and silver medallists at grades VII and VIII Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music are current or past JD students, for instance). We achieve consistently good results at Music College Entrance, frequently with Scholarships. While it is our aim that all our students should have achieved at least the level of music College entrance by the time they leave us, some progress to careers and courses of study other than in music. Yet 70-80% of leavers proceed each year to higher education in Music, roughly half of these at Music Colleges. Many will eventually join the music profession as performers, teachers and composers, following the patterns of Liveryman Philip Jones perhaps, or Andrew and Julian Lloyd Webber, Julian Bream, John Williams, Hugh Bean, John Lill, Mark Anthony Turnage, Michael Gough Matthews, Meredith Davies et al, all former members of the Junior Department.

The training is expensive, some £1800 a year at present rates. Local authorities play a major part in their

own right in training young musicians and some still support JD students financially yet their ability to help has been hugely diminished recently (from 60%-30% of students over a ten year period). Consequently the burden of cost falls increasingly on parents, families (who are less and less able to afford the fees) and our own fund raising efforts. But is the effort and expense justified? To judge by the results of the fervour of the students, who frequently tell me that Saturdays are the highlight of their life, the answer must be an emphatic "yes"! However, the longer term financial situation for the department gives constant cause for concern.

Since joining the Livery I have been greatly heartened by the interest and support shown by Court members attending our concerts. How could you support us too? Perhaps through recruitment of students – you will surely be aware of talented youngsters in your locality, who might benefit from what we can offer in terms of top class training and a stimulating musical environment; perhaps through offering financial support (both in the short and long term) to students directly or through the JD bursary fund; perhaps by sponsoring specific areas of our work; perhaps performance opportunities or perhaps by donating, through the WCM, prizes which would in turn raise awareness of the WCM itself. Perhaps you could bear us in mind writing your Will?

Please do not hesitate to contact me at:  
The RCM

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for more information on the department as described, or our pioneering Mini-(Double) Bass scheme for 7-11 year olds and also of our frequent (free) concerts to which you are cordially invited.

## Rhythm 'n' greens.

The Wealden Advertiser printed an advertisement for a concert by Kings College Cambridge Choral Scholars including 'choral and organic music'.

*The Daily Telegraph.*