Ardrossan Academy Orchestra Circa 1960-1980

Did you, or anyone you are in touch with, ever play in Ardrossan Academy's award-winning orchestra, either under Jimmy Tate or Ken Hetherington? These were days when the orchestra had a high profile and produced many fine musicians or contributed greatly to members' ability to appreciate musicianship, support others, work in a team, etc........ in whatever field they ended up!

If you did, please consider this proposition seriously and pass it on to others.

My name is Joy Kirkwood and I was lucky enough to lead the orchestra (when it was between finer musicians!). I didn't continue to play violin much over the years but my experience led me to become involved with supporting schools' music, through my job in primary school teaching, mostly in England. I also 'kept my hand in', with the odd ceilidh banding and stuff and eventually when I retired took up the bow again, joined an amateur orchestra playing second violin for Sunderland Symphony Orchestra. I still rely on good habits formed at school, far more than from the short time with Edinburgh University Orchestra. I wish my skills could improve further but that's another story.

When I was teaching, I sometimes involved my pupils in an initiative called 'The Cobweb Orchestra', which is a movement to support playing in orchestras for people of all ages and stages of music-making. Sometimes a Cobweb orchestra would meet for a day and everyone would play 'what they could', alongside more advanced musicians, before performing for friends and family. It was a great initiative and still exists in the North East of England, attracting all levels and ages. It is fully inclusive and welcomes non standard instruments.

Recently, I have been reminded of the old days at the Academy (there is a reunion of my year group this term) and, having heard of the musical successes of so many, and of the life and career successes of others, who see the Orchestra as a defining formative experience, I thought it would be great to have a reunion to celebrate what was achieved and what has been developed since (a cobweb!)

I am aiming high because I believe that we could put together a day's reunion, involving key players, whose career is in music, with others who dabble or play completely different instruments now and with people who just want to become reacquainted with old friends and or old skills. I want to form a Cobweb Orchestra for a day, with a performance for friends and family. I hope to attract a couple of local celebrities, all former members, including those currently involved in delivering the music curriculum in Ayrshire. They may like to use the concert as a showcase for a group they work with?

 All of this would take a couple of years to pull off. There is already a core of people interested. If I get enough positive responses, I will keep you posted. If you are interested in this proposal, please let me have your name (old and new), instrument and level of playing (although you may not want to play and that's ok too as we will need people to help organise the event on the day, etc.), email or other contact detail and an indication of the time of year that you think would be best for this event and any time that you definitely could not do. Also, let me know if you'd like to be on a working group to set it up.

At the moment, I'm thinking the reunion will be held in at least 2014 maybe even 2015, at a weekend and not in winter. The final date will depend on availability of key guests and participants and the venue will probably be a local church. I am open to suggestions re participants. It may be advisable to widen the cobweb to include current pupils of participants. There may be a small cost to hire premises and music and you would be responsible for your own accommodation.

joylowther2000@yahoo.co.uk Please pass this on quickly. Thanks, JOY