

Music During Michaelmas Term 2020

Like much else, music has been very different this term and the musicians, the ensembles, the rehearsals and the teaching has adapted to what now already feels like a new normal. Careful preparation of the Music School and changes to the music calendar, to ensembles and to rehearsals have made things work differently - but successfully, nonetheless.

First, we have had to postpone any larger events such as the House Singing and Joint Choral Society - or live concerts with audiences. Instead, we have had many smaller musical events that have brought in, at most, a single adjudicator for competitions or masterclasses.

Our events this term have included

2 solo concert platforms,
2 masterclasses for woodwind and violin and
3 solo competitions - for Senior, Intermediate and Junior levels. All of these smaller events were devoid of parental audience, but all were filmed and streamed to make them available to watch by parents, families and friends.

We have enjoyed some wonderful individual performances throughout the term. The winners of our solo competitions this included Oliver Simpson (cello) in the Senior, Laurence Peverall (piano) in the Intermediate and David Hrushevski (clarinet) in the Junior Competition.

In our woodwind and violin masterclasses we heard some superb performances from many musicians and in our solo competitions the adjudicators expressed the highest admiration for the quality of Abingdon musicians.

Several ensembles, such as Brass and Wind Bands, were suspended due to having to avoid mixing year group bubbles - but that provided one of the silver linings of lockdown - the formation of year group orchestras for 3rd Year and 4th Year, which rehearsed separately and came together for recordings near the end of term. Led by Nikhil Tennant and Boco To, these orchestras reached a high standard of performance and we were pleased to welcome the Headmaster as a guest in the double bass section.

Our Chamber Orchestra, led by Ashwin Tennant, played well this term and our First Orchestra, led by Dashiell Hathaway rehearsed in sectionals for much of the term and came together for a recording of Schumann's Piano Concerto, with the excellent Nick Raptakis as our solo pianist. Outstanding performances in Marquez' Danzon No 2 were given in the woodwind section by Matt Hoult on clarinet and Oliver Glover on oboe.

Although very different, this has been a very busy time for our musicians and we pay tribute to the resilience and flexibility of all the boys and to the enthusiasm and professionalism of the music teachers. Very well done to all our musicians!

Michael Stinton
9 December 2020