

# To Brian

## A celebration of your 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday and 25 years with MSO

15<sup>th</sup> October 2016



*Dear Brian*

*Here is a small snapshot of your amazing 25 years with MSO, with heartfelt thanks for all you have achieved with us.*

*From players, past and present, audience, committee, and soloists,*

....starting with a tribute from  
John Lill, President of Maidstone Orchestral Society



I have had the good fortune to perform piano concertos with Brian on several occasions, including a wide range of repertoire. It's been a consistently inspiring experience, not least because he recreates music without any affectation or gimmickry. Artificiality is unknown to him and because he remains unmannered, the music flows naturally, undistorted and is absent of wilful, self-conscious 'interpretation'. The result of course, brings the music to life very vividly and the structure of the music becomes all the more powerful. Brian is one of the few conductors with whom I have worked, whose collaborations are so innately natural that I have little need to observe him – and I mean that as a big compliment. I just know he and the orchestra will always be at one during a concert - and they always are! Among the diverse concertos we have performed, his contribution through such major works as the Brahms and Rachmaninov concertos has appeared effortless and always seamless.

Lesser conductors throw themselves around laboriously, hoping to impress when of course it is simply misdirected energy and plain bad technique. They continually strive to find things in the score that simply are not there, yet fail to realise what are! In Brian's case, it is just the opposite scenario and what a blessed relief that is. His rare qualities become very evident when realising the very high standards he has achieved from the orchestras lucky enough to work with him.

I heartily congratulate Brian on his seventieth birthday and know that his birthday concert on 15<sup>th</sup> October concert will be another resounding and totally justified success! *John Lill*



Brian has always been one of my favourite conductors. Collaborating with him in a concerto is a pleasure because he is such a sympathetic and naturally gifted musician. Add to the mix his charming personality and the affection he inspires in his players, you have all the ingredients for really enjoyable music making! He is not afraid to programme unusual repertoire, too – from Francaix to Proctor to Mozart and Copland – it has been a pleasure to play them all with you.

Many happy returns and congratulations,

*Emma Johnson*



## The Violins

Here are your current 1<sup>st</sup> violins:



Back row L to R - Francis Fegan, Deidre Hayes, Julie Moore, Jenny Walland, Philip Williamson, Julie Evans  
Front row L to R - Nicki Knight, Justine Earl, Elizabeth Ovenden, Elizabeth Carpenter, John Moore, Sophie Williamson, Robin Brightman

I first remember Brian from my days in the Kent Youth Orchestra under Bela de Csillery many years ago when we were both in our teens. Brian had a shock of red hair and could be detected from anywhere in the room even from the back row of the double basses....and if he was in the back row of the basses he still gave the impression that he was in charge of them all!

My next recollection of him was in the Barbican in about 1983 when I was a member of the London Symphony Orchestra. The LSO had moved from the Royal Festival Hall to their new home at the Barbican a year before and needed to quickly build up new audiences, a tough challenge now that the Barbican was in competition with the RFH. And so it was deemed appropriate to follow a direction of giving several concerts a month in the Barbican in order to attract new audiences. The orchestra needed a small handful of extremely able conductors who could hone a performance of some merit and professionalism on just one rehearsal, and Brian was one of this handful of conductors. I don't know how many times I played under him during this time, creating an overture, concerto and symphony with just one three hour rehearsal but it must have been in the 30 somethings.

And then one day, having played occasionally with the MSO as a professional extra down the back of the section, Philip Lee phoned me to ask whether I'd be interested in taking over from him as leader, to which I responded positively and have now been the MSO leader under Brian for four or so seasons, enjoying his musicianship and musical integrity. He has a great imagination for programming and repertoire and we are enormously indebted to his unflinching efforts in the continuing success of the MSO.

Happy 70th Brian. May there be many more seasons of varied and exciting music making with you.

*Robin*

I joined MSO in 1977 whilst still at school, so the orchestra has played a significant part in my life for the best part of 40 years. Although the standard of playing was high when I joined, it has improved considerably under your baton, and I feel privileged to have been introduced to many works which I feel sure would have remained 'hidden' had I not played them with MSO. Having experienced the styles of many different conductors, from playing with other orchestras over the years, I can honestly say that I never feel as 'anxious' over a concert performance as when playing under you. This is simply because the players know that you demand and attain the very highest standards from every player, so the pressure is always on. One thing which regularly amazes me is your ability to hear everything going on (or not!) within the orchestra, such is your grasp of the score. Being aware of your acute sense of hearing, I often wonder what you must think of my playing during some of the more difficult passages, sitting where I do at No. 3 - you have been very kind in not mentioning anything so far....

During my time with the orchestra, I have served on the committee in every position (except Secretary), and have become aware just how valuable you have been for the orchestra 'behind the scenes', as many people are still unaware just how much work you do for the society, such as the design of brochures/posters/flyers, and often volunteering important suggestions to help the orchestra continue moving forwards.

You have always been keen to encourage younger players to experience life in the orchestra, and one of my proudest moments was when our son joined the trumpet section at the age of 14. I'll always remember the concert in which we performed the Janáček Sinfonietta, looking up at Darren playing in a line of 9 trumpeters, a proud moment for any parent, and one which was only possible because of your policy of encouraging youngsters to join the orchestra.

Thursday evenings have become a permanent fixture on the calendar, and whilst many of us 'bemoan' the Sunday afternoon rehearsals preceding each concert, secretly we all look forward to spending this time together, as much for social reasons as for the orchestral playing experience; for many of us, MSO has become a way of life, and for myself, I know that much of this is down to one individual. Thank you, Brian, for enriching our lives in so many ways, happy 70th birthday!

*John Moore*

It's great to be back at MSO again after such a long absence! Best wishes for your 70th, Brian!

*Philip and Sophie Williamson*

I have been a 1st violinist with the Maidstone Symphony Orchestra since before Brian first became conductor and under his professional leadership and experience I feel we have gone from strength to strength over the past 25 years that he has been with us. Brian has always shown total dedication and commitment to the orchestra and has never missed a rehearsal with us.

For many of us in the orchestra with commitments of full time jobs and families it is hard to put in the many hours of personal practise that is required to achieve a professional finish that is pleasing to Brian, and I personally feel that it is necessary to give this practise time back to Brian as he gives so much to the orchestra in his musical knowledge, expertise, passion and drive. For me personally my highlight was playing the Shostakovich Symphony No7 "Leningrad" last season because it was such a wonderful opportunity to perform a work of this nature because of its complexity and length, which ultimately was also well received by the audience attending.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally Brian for all you have done and given to me and the Maidstone Symphony Orchestra.

With very best wishes, *Jenny Walland*

Extra Value!

I wonder if you realise just how much I get out of attending your rehearsals?

As conductor for another Community Orchestra (Kaleidoscope Arts Centre), I find myself analysing how you get so much out of the players in MSO and I try to use your inspiration and rehearsing techniques to help me through my rehearsals at Rochester. Yes, you may have a full orchestra and I have 35 players of which 2 are recorders, one a bass clarinet, one trombone (sole brass player), no oboes and a host of strings, but at the end of the day we are all in it to get the best out of our players and enjoy music.

Thank you Brian for providing the opportunity to play all those wonderful pieces and for inspiring me to continue to bring the joy of music to others. Have a really lovely birthday and please continue to be our conductor. *Julie Moore*



Are the back desk of 1sts not concentrating?.. Well, perhaps they just need a bit of encouragement!



2014





2014

They usually listen to what you are saying, though!

These were some of the players when you first came to MSO:



The current 2<sup>nd</sup> violins

There are a lot of them, but do they all come to all the rehearsals?



The coffee is an important part of rehearsals, as you work the orchestra so hard - spot the difference between these two photos:



Happy Birthday wishes from Jackie Hines, Diane Jones, Ian Ratcliffe, Kate Coles, Caroline Veall, Phil Lee, Katherine Tindall, Mung Bernhardt, Emma Blake, Eileen Berridge, Elizabeth Rooke and Lindy Bosworth

I have enjoyed performing such a variety of different works under your excellent leadership.  
Happy Birthday! *Caroline*

Some of the violinists go back many years!

I have known Brian a long time! He conducted the BBCSO a few times, but for some years he was Chorus Master of the BBC Symphony Chorus. After a long time, I retired and moved to Maidstone where I met Brian again after attending an MSO concert. He invited me to join. It was a happy reunion! Congratulations on your 70<sup>th</sup> Brian. *Philip Lee*

About 55 years ago, Brian and I sang in the same madrigal group and played in the same string group, when we were at grammar schools in Tunbridge Wells. I like playing with the MSO (nearly 38 years now) because the players are friendly and Brian chooses challenging music that makes me practice. Brian gets the best out of us and I enjoy playing under his baton. Happy birthday! *Mary Parkinson.*



## The violas



*Dear Brian*

*Wishing you a very happy 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

*With very best wishes from the MSO viola section*



Sue and you are enjoying  
Margaret's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party, as  
are some of the viola section!





2013

The viola section in action





## Guess which section this is!



We do have a photo of some of us with cellos.....



Julie, Camilla, Harriet, Karen, Jonathan, Abi, Sophie, Nicci and Angela



And what do you think is in these cups? Well something has to get us through the Sunday rehearsals!

Sophie, Karen, Camilla, Harriet, Angela, Julie, Nicci and Abi

....but we seem to get better pictures and better attendance when we are socialising!



Karen Pigot, Harriet Finch, Sarah Hare, Camilla Titterton, Julie Peat, Abi Cooper, Angela Migden, Nicci Whitaker, Kate Prince and William Stow

My most abiding memory has to be the Ein Heldenleben concert a few years ago (May 2005). When the Hero theme comes back, there's a massive build up and everyone seems to be going up towards a top E flat, but we go down to a big fat bottom E flat. William and I relished it every time in rehearsal and got into the habit of raising our bows rather theatrically as we approached the magic moment! Fantastic - and Brian indulged us, which was very sporting of him. *Jonathan Cane*



Brian, I wish you a Very Happy Birthday and look forward to many more years of music making with you! *Julie Peat* xx

Dear Brian  
It has been a privilege to be part of MSO under your guidance for all these years. MSO has reached levels that are truly inspirational and I am proud of being a member of the orchestra and the leader of the 'cello section. Long may it continue!  
Happy Birthday!  
*Angela* xx

Here's a photo of some of the longest-serving cellists: can you believe that we have 142 years of playing in MSO between us!!



I thoroughly enjoyed playing the cello in the MSO for many years under Brian's direction and very much regretted having to leave the orchestra when my left arm became paralysed. Among the highlights was certainly the Berlioz in tonight's programme and also a wide variety of other works. With very best wishes from *Etain and John Hatfield*

Happy Birthday Brian! You are fast catching me up both in age, and in years devoted to MSO – 92 years between us - (with me being in my 67<sup>th</sup> season and you in your 26<sup>th</sup>). I joined the orchestra in 1950, a month before I was aged 14 and you would have been 4 years of age, and probably already playing with your 78 rpm records, I'll bet.

I have enjoyed playing (and smoking!) with you for the 25 years we have been acquainted, and really feel that I have let you down on the smoking front – it's one of the things I really miss in my current life.

I have been looking at the programme for your first concert with MSO, which was an historic one on more than one front. It was the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert of MSO (Tam O'Shanter, Arnold; Beethoven 4 with Howard Shelley; Peacock Variations, Kodaly; Les Preludes, Liszt and The Queen). As well as being your first concert as our official conductor and MD, it was the first in the Leisure Centre. Janet Ash was then leading the Seconds and Peter Avis the Violas. Peter Hatfield was leading the Horns and of course, Angela was leading the Cellos. Sheila Marshall was orchestral secretary and I was the librarian. Eunice Holton and Sally Kirby were still around – remember them? Alan Vardy was playing with us, and dear Larry Stuart-Smith on flute – and many familiar names in violins and cellos.

Keep up the good work Brian and have a very happy Birthday.

With Love, *Margaret*

## The Bass section



Rob Ferguson, Lisa Fegan, Katie Salmon, Jasmine Otaki, John Summerfield, Peter Colman

Dear Brian,

Do you remember that very snowy winter when a taxi with snow-chains made it's way up Blue Bell Hill to fetch me, and a little reedy-sounding bass was borrowed from the KCYO instrument store? I was the only bass to play at the concert that day!

As leader of the basses, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you all these years. During that time the section has gone from strength to strength. Why do we all keep coming back? Your musical vision and integrity are an inspiration, and each concert is rewarding in its own right. We know we are fortunate in having a conductor who is a great technician, and is able to convey and bring out what he wants from us, rare qualities. Because of these things, the orchestra is a living entity, constantly evolving and continuing to enrich our lives. When we re-visit works, they seem fresh and charged with a new energy. There is always something more to be attained. There's a bravery and trust in tackling new and ever more complex works, and huge satisfaction in succeeding.

On a more personal level, the orchestra has been my musical life-line, in good times and bad, without which I would have been starved of quality playing and a professional approach.

Thank you!

*Jasmine*

Dear Brian,

Why travel so far?

- ✚ To play concertos with marvellous soloists; young and old.
- ✚ To play in a committed double bass section with more than a couple of players – so rare!
- ✚ A total absence of 'Warblers' even if that means Mahler 4 is out!
- ✚ The opportunity to play some fabulous symphonies that most other 'community' orchestras couldn't touch most notably for us the Mahler Symphonies and The Leningrad. Now how about...



- ✚ And of course you, Brian, are dedicated, motivational & visionary. May this continue for many years to come!

*Lisa and Francis Fegan x*



I have suddenly realised that I have been playing with Maidstone Symphony Orchestra for 20 years, when I decided to move from my previous orchestra for various reasons and was aware that Brian had taken on MSO. Having first come across Brian at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as a student, I knew of his abilities as a musician and as a conductor. I have had the opportunity of observing his work over many years - especially his work at the Proms with the BBC, its Orchestras as well as the BBC Symphony Chorus.

Looking through some old MSO brochures it has been staggering to realise the range of works played. How many other orchestras are capable of mounting a performance of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring; symphonies by Mahler, Bruckner and Shostakovich as well as the works of repertoire composers like Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms? In addition, to have the opportunity to perform with world class soloists like John Lill in piano concertos by Brahms, Beethoven and Rachmaninov has been a great privilege.

Thank you, Brian, for 20 years of wonderful music making - long may it continue.

*John Summerfield*



## Message from our Bass-playing Chairman, Peter Colman!

This is Brian's 25th season conducting MSO as MOS's Music Director and we are celebrating this, together with the proximity of his 70th birthday, in tonight's concert.

When I first started playing with MSO, as an "extra" double bass on concert day, I was immediately struck with the quality of the playing and especially with the quality of the conducting. A successful conductor has musical insight, excellent communication skills, a good understanding of psychology and considerable technical conducting skills. Oh, and a wealth of experience! In my 40 years of music-making, Brian easily comes closest to meeting this demanding combination of attributes. I am extremely grateful, both personally and on MSO's behalf, to Brian for performing this role so adeptly for such an extended period. That he also is an accomplished designer and deliverer of publicity materials is a great bonus!

Best Wishes,

*Peter*

The Birthday concert!

Saturday 15th October 2016

Brian Wright's 70th birthday concert

**Alexander Panfilov**  
piano

Dvořák - Overture, Carnival  
Shostakovich - Piano Concerto No. 2  
Berlioz - Symphonie Fantastique

An exciting opening concert of the season, celebrating both Brian Wright's 70th birthday and his 25 years as conductor of MSO. Dvořák's sparkling overture is matched by the extrovert brilliance of Shostakovich's concerto. Our soloist is the young, prizewinning Russian pianist, Alexander Panfilov. On the title page of Berlioz's supremely passionate and autobiographical *Symphonie Fantastique*, which includes the famous "March to the Scaffold", the composer quoted from Victor Hugo: "all I have loved, all I have suffered, all I have attempted".

This season's brochure, designed by Brian

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[mso.org.uk](http://mso.org.uk)   **TICKETSOURCE**

## The Vice Presidents

### Steve Migden

As past Principal Horn (and more recently Fourth Horn), twice MOS Chairman, current MOS Vice President and MSO Pre-concert Talk presenter you'd expect that I would have a few things to say about you Brian to commemorate your 70th birthday. Well, I have more than a few but will stick to just a couple:

1. As a horn player, I have tremendous respect for you as a musician. How lucky MSO has been over the last 25 years to have a conductor of your calibre! You have the gift to pull the orchestra forward from 'OMG' first rehearsals to fantastic concerts, exceeding everyone's expectations, including my own. You always made me play better than I thought I could!

2. As MOS Chairman, I have never had, nor know of, a more intelligent, positive and contributive MD than you. Through rough and smooth, you remain steadfast, trusting that if we kept producing first class concerts and exciting programmes for the orchestra to play and the audience to enjoy then MSO, as a community orchestra, would continue to provide a musical experience for Kent that is second to none in the country and beyond.

Thank you so much for all that you have done and are doing for MSO/MOS. Long may it continue!

Oh, and HAPPY BIRTHDAY! *Steve*

(Steve's favourite quote from you is "I hate mezzo forte!")

### Janet Ash

Congratulations Brian on your 70th birthday! I can't believe it's over 25 years since we met in Frittenden with David King to discuss the possibility of your conducting the Maidstone Symphony Orchestra. You had never conducted an "amateur" orchestra before and we asked why you would be interested. Your reply was "to give something back to the local community" and so you agreed to take up the baton. One of your most challenging concerts must have been in February 1991 when Steven Isserlis came to play the Shostakovich 'cello concerto, the day after heavy snow. The cost of cancelling would have been prohibitive. We assembled an orchestra from those who could travel, Steven came by taxi and we had to find a double bass in Maidstone for Jasmine to play as it was too risky to bring her bass from Medway. Despite the reduced number of players, the intrepid audience enjoyed a great concert. Then there was Tiang Jian playing Rachmaninov 2 in 1998 – he was staying with us and suffering from jet lag, so got up late before the rehearsal and I got a speeding fine getting him to Mote Hall on time!! Another memorable occasion was when you and Ulf came round for a meal and we had lent Ulf a bicycle for the day. The meal was ready, it was getting dark, but where was Ulf? We need not have worried that he might have had an accident the day before the concert – Ulf was just enjoying cycling round the Kent countryside!

So, after 25 years, what have you given back to the community? Well, you have given us far more than we could ever have imagined. For example:

1. You've conducted 120 concerts with dozens of world-class soloists, plus an amazing Messiah in the Albert Hall, with hundreds in the choir. Every one of the over 800 rehearsals is like a masterclass in orchestral playing.
2. You renamed MSO as a Community orchestra very early on and said that it would take you 20 years to achieve what the orchestra is now - close to a professional standard. You have created probably the best community orchestra in the country.
3. Your skill in graphic design of brochures and programmes is a huge asset to MOS

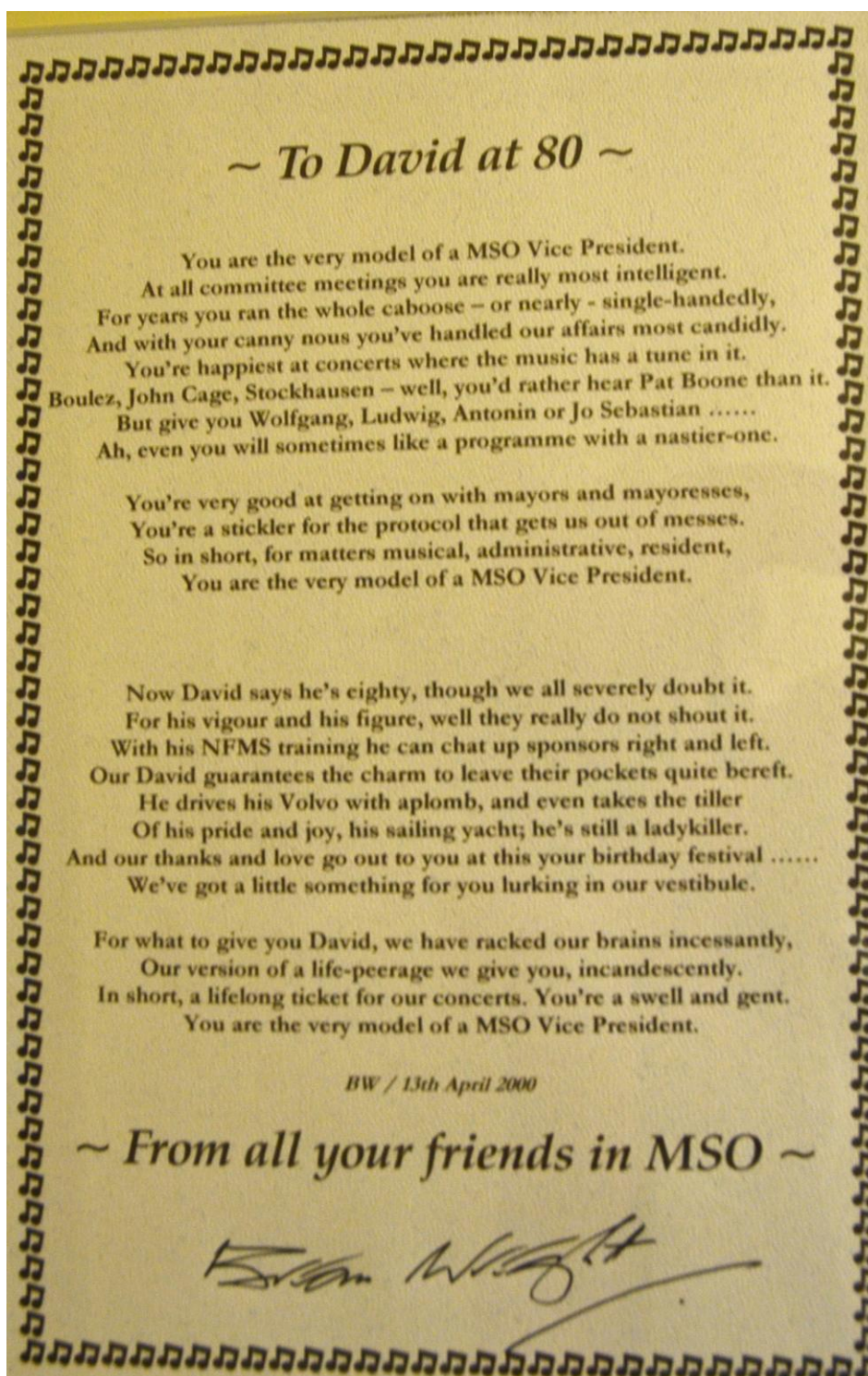
Thank you, Brian. I'm sorry I'm not still playing with you, but it's always wonderful to come back and listen.

And.... many congratulations on the promised Honorary DMus, *Jen x*



David King

Do you remember singing this at my 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday party?



Sorry I'm not able to sing you a song, but here are some of my reminiscences!



## Brian at 70!

The Kent Music Society was an association of Kent Music Associations and every society that was involved in music in any way was entitled to send a representative to its meetings, which were held twice a year at the Kent Music School.

So it was not all together a surprise to me when Brian Wright turned up there one day in 1989. I have a great friend who was in those days a member of Goldsmith's Choral Union in South East London, and I had often seen Brian conducting them and also as conductor of BBC orchestras; and frequently heard his voice when he presented programmes on BBC Radio 3 at Going Home time.

I heard that Brian was coming to live in Maidstone to be near where his wife Sue's elderly parents were living, so I kept a eye open for him. I am not sure how he heard about the meeting but it so happened that I was the first to arrive, and this good looking young man was the second. "Good afternoon", he said, "I am Brian Wright."

So we seized the opportunity. I told him that the MSO conductor, Bela, was getting older and would one day retire, and I said, "Without commitment, would you like to be informed when that day comes" and he replied, "Without commitment yes I would."

In the following January I noticed that you were conducting the RPO at the Barbican and Janet and I went to hear you. After the concert we had no doubt that we would like to engage you as MSO conductor if you were willing to come, and in May we told you so. Within a few days Bela did in fact resign and we had a second meeting with you where we set the wheels in motion.

The brochure for the following season's concerts had already been distributed but you were happy to take on these works with few changes.

And so began a collaboration – Brian with MSO – that has lasted longer than with any previous conductor. You quickly established a rapport with the players that attracted the best instrumentalists from all over the county, and the standard of playing was such that they were able to tackle music that was considerably more difficult than other non-professional orchestras would attempt.

In Bela's day the Music Officer of South East Arts sent a letter to the Maidstone Borough Council saying that MSO was among the top ten community orchestras in the country, and its standard today will certainly put it at the top of those top ten! Another view of your competence is seen when world famous soloists tell us how much they enjoy playing with the MSO under you. And when a professional music critic always writes approvingly of the MSO concerts that he regularly attends, we can be sure that your superiority of performance is recognised by others than ourselves.

Your talent in visual perception, designing brochures and programmes for MSO use, comes as a complete surprise. Not often are people given more than one creative gift, but you have been blessed with two!

And so Brian, you are now 70; it doesn't seem possible. When I was young we used to say that at 70 a person had one foot in the grave and the other on a bar of soap, but you have the same vigour that you had when you were twenty years younger, and we can be sure that you will continue to wield the stick for many a year to come.

*David*

## The Woodwind



The Wind section in 2009, Back Row: Dawn Willcocks, Paul Bourdillon, Philip Le Bas, Marcia Brittain  
Front Row: Angela Love, Alison Haywood, Anna Binney, David Montague, Stuart Garden

It's perhaps a cliché that 'music changes lives'. But it's certainly true in my case. Brian's invitation to join MSO was nothing short of a musical rebirth for which I will always be profoundly grateful. I had emerged from a long and debilitating illness when Brian rang me up with a precious opportunity. Having had to relearn how to play from scratch I now found myself sitting in the first flute chair of a lovely local symphony orchestra. After that first baptism of fire (Debussy's 'Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune', Respighi's 'Pines of Rome' and Janacek's 'Sinfonietta') I went on to experience some wonderful musical highlights such as Debussy's 'La Mer' and the Dvorak Concerto with Adrian Brendel to name just two. From Brian's invitation came deep and lasting friendships including a wonderful godson. Thank you Brian for much more than music.

All best wishes, *Anna*

My personal favourite concert was when we played the Shostakovich Symphony No 7 The Leningrad with the two brass sections. I wasn't keen when I first heard it but soon liked the first two movements, then the rest. The loudness did hurt my ears at times but it was AMAZING. Wish we could do it again – please? Thank you to Brian for suggesting we play this. *Dawn Willcocks*

I have played 2nd bassoon in MSO for over half of my life, so that is some indication of what it means to me. It is so special to be part of the woodwind section of this great orchestra. I have been under Brian's baton for a quarter of a century. I am grateful for the wonderful repertoire that Brian has brought to the orchestra and the attention to detail that Brian brings in his role as conductor. He does not miss a trick! My favourite pieces have been The Sorcerer's apprentice and happily (because we are playing this at Brian's birthday concert) Symphonie Fantastique....awesome parts for the bassoon!

Love *Marcia*xx



The Wind section today (remarkable continuity from 2009!)

Back Row: Dawn Willcocks, Graeme Vinall, Philip Le Bas, Marcia Brittain

Front Row: Jane Walker, David Montague, Anna Binney, Alison Haywood, Angela Love

I am a recent member of the woodwind section and a recent incomer to SE England after many years abroad. MSO means a huge amount to me and I feel very privileged to be part of it. Brian has quite simply turned it into one of the best community orchestras in the country.

Brian has imparted so many things - obviously it is so much more than waving a stick - a role like a teacher, illuminator, who reveals what this music is saying, with or without words. Especially in the sectional rehearsals which are fantastic sessions. He reminds us to listen to each other. Second oboe is a particular role which I find challenging and rewarding; Brian has an incredible understanding of all the pitfalls, which makes me all the keener to address them and be equipped to work to his direction and meet his expectations. Another thing I have learnt from him is about the difference between the conductor's role in the rehearsal and the special kind of leadership he brings to the actual concert performance.

There's nothing worse than the feeling you have let him down and nothing better than thinking it might have sort of gone quite well. That is the authority he has. Although I have only played in three concerts so far they have all been exciting. The wind players in Mahler 9 finish playing several minutes before the end. Watching and listening from my desk as Brian drew the last moments of that extraordinary symphony from the string players was utterly, utterly unforgettable. *Jane Walker*

Dear Brian,

I first came across you at a Kent Music School 'inset' session on conducting many years ago at The Masters House. We played 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' and I remember thinking that I'd not come across such expert conducting before - indeed I told my wife so when I got home!

My first experience of MSO was playing in 'La Creation du Monde' on saxophone and once again I was struck by the attention to detail and the knowledge of the score. It's always been a pleasure playing with the orchestra - such good repertoire and rigorous rehearsal. I am delighted to now be a permanent member. Thankyou, and Happy Birthday Brian. *Graeme Vinall*



Dear Brian. Many Happy returns for a truly memorable birthday!

It seems I joined MSO as principal oboe way back in time. My first programme included Walton 1 which I certainly found challenging and exciting. That has been the essence of MSO throughout my time with this illustrious musical family. Thanks to your hugely knowledgeable leadership, patience and belief in MSO's potential, the repertoire studied and performed has been fantastic. It is truly amazing that as a community orchestra we can achieve such musical heights throughout the range of musical periods, from classical to modern. Rehearsals and concerts are always exciting, presenting some mega-challenges, which thanks to you are achievable to the great enjoyment of players and audience alike.

It is difficult to single out particular pieces and events, as all the programmes and soloists have been so significant. However, a few come to mind. Do you recall 'a short ride in a fast machine'? During the concert, I became completely lost, then vaguely knowing where I was supposed to be when the brass came in, only to be lost again! To me it seemed a very long ride. On another occasion, during the performance of Dance Sacrale in the Rite of Spring, the orchestral knitting started to unravel rapidly. However, you managed to hold it all together and regrouped the troops for an exhilarating climax. I loved playing Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra and Janacek's Symphonietta, together with the Mahler, Beethoven and Brahms symphonies. Soloists have been amazing too, such as Laura the cellist and of course John Lill. It has been such an wonderful privilege to have had the opportunity to play them all.

MSO has become a hugely important part of my life. At the end of the rehearsals and concerts I always think of the many hurdles to be crossed before we next meet again. Thanks for putting up with some of my more irritating ways such as not listening properly the first time, and wondering where we are going from in the music. I always value your comments, as I know they are to guide me to better musical things.

Have a great day! *David Montague*

And here is a little limerick to cheer your day:

An awesome conductor called Brian  
Whose baton deploys like an iron  
To smooth out the errors, and calm all those terrors  
So MSO plays like a LION!

I began playing with the MSO in 2005 and hold the orchestra very close to my heart. I have played with many community orchestras and I'm very happy to say that the MSO is the best. They have high quality players but, like an excellent restaurant, high quality ingredients mean nothing without an expert to blend them together.

Brian has such an understanding of the works that are presented and he communicates this to the orchestra in a way where musicians of all standards are able to recreate his interpretations.

I have learnt so much from him, and he can say so much in non-verbal communication under the baton that says so much more than words. It is always a pleasure to play under him.

*Stuart Garden*



## The Horns and the Brass



Congratulations to Brian on 25 years at the helm of a fine community orchestra, with many thanks for all your work over a quarter of a century of great music making.

With very best wishes on your 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday - may you enjoy many more!

*Helen Newing*, 2012 to date, *Chris Gibbs*, 1978–1982 and 2005 to date

*Simon Phillips*, 2015 to date, *Linda Smithers*, 2013 to date



The Schumann Konzertstück in February 1999

Brian is a brilliant programmer. He is not one to just stick an overture, a concert and a symphony on a list and expect it to work. He is uncompromising, and his programmes are musical entities. I remember him pointing out when we performed John Adams' "The Chairman Dances" how the last chord led on to the next piece in the programme – Beethoven's 4<sup>th</sup> Piano Concerto.

He was also excellent at making sure we didn't only play the well-worn warhorses, but explored some of the by-ways of the repertoire, or composers who will never find universal favour. (I think particularly of Bartok, and Webern). But, occasionally, this integrity might be challenged by someone in the audience. I remember a committee meeting when the MSO's then secretary read out a complaint from an audience member that we had performed "Mahler – and discordant Mahler at that". Brian almost exploded and went for a long walk while the committee wondered whether he would ever return (he did).

Brian's attention to detail at all times made for some "interesting" rehearsals. I remember one freezing cold winter evening when we rehearsed Beethoven's Eroica. Brian went straight into the frantic scherzo. The poor string players' fingers were still icy cold and the notes were not flowing. Somehow I think Brian, quickly warming up with some brisk conducting, forgot just how cold we had all been until a few minutes earlier.

Occasionally Brian's attention to musical detail could get a bit, shall we say, "demanding". This, I began to notice, was around an hour after the beginning of a rehearsal – it usually became necessary to have a break, during which enough nicotine was put back into Brian's system to allow him to relax and enjoy the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the rehearsal.

Brian has worked with some of the greatest musicians in the business, and he's fond of telling stories from his past. These almost always have a relevant musical point, but my desk partner was fond of muttering "now: listen, and learn....." as the stories began. The musical points made were usually apt and pretty memorable. My favourite was when rehearsing a Brahms symphony. Brian asked the strings to add a little rest to create a moment of silence. He explained that he had seen a note in parts owned by the BBC Symphony Orchestra to the effect that Sir Adrian Boult had said (his teacher) Hans Richter had added the same rest, and Brahms had said this was OK. That's quite an impressive lineage – from Brahms, to Richter, to Boult to MSO via Brian..... *Jonathan Stoneman*



Do you remember the Pictures at an Exhibition concert in March 2000  
with all these wonderful brass players?



Here are your current brass players:



Roy Drinkwater, Natalie Hall, Gary Rossiter, Alan Bridges, Liz Smallwood, Alan Vardy, Clive Skinner

I joined MSO around 1999, having retired after 24 years' service in The Band Of The Corps Of Royal Engineers at Chatham.

Being relatively new to serious classical/orchestral repertoire, I found Brian's guidance in the rehearsal room invaluable and gradually made the adjustment in tone, technique and volume from wind band playing.

Brian's extensive knowledge of the intricacies of these great works has been a real eye (and ear) opener for me and I feel that I have benefitted greatly by playing under his baton.

*Roy Drinkwater*



## The Percussion and Keyboard



Happy Birthday, Brian, and congratulations on conducting MSO for 25 years. It is a pleasure to work with such a knowledgeable, patient, and devoted conductor and I hope to continue to work with you and MSO for years to come. *Keith*



Keith Price in action





A good view of the percussion in 2009

As an ad hoc keyboard 'extra' player at several MSO concerts over the past 20 years or so, it is a very pleasant opportunity to say a big thank you to you, Brian, for your enterprising programmes and for giving me the chance to play the piano in *Petrushka*, *Shostakovich 5*, *Copland's Clarinet Concerto* (with Emma Johnson), organ in the *Saint-Saens' Organ Symphony* and the *Poulenc Concerto* and celesta in the *Korngold Concerto* (twice!). You have also generously commissioned (and conducted) my orchestration of the *E minor Brahms' Cello Sonata* (for Tim Hugh) and my concert overture *Fairmeadow*, which opened the Orchestra's Centenary Season.

Long may you conduct over us! *Malcom Riley*





## Audience, Committee, Friends and others!

### Our Membership Secretaries

We had been Membership Secretaries of MOS for a number of years when Brian came on the scene. His predecessor, Béla de Csillery was a hard act to follow. He had over the years of his tenure raised the profile of the Orchestra and the musical standards achieved and he had a loyal following in the Society and with the local public. However, we were at the transitional period of what we now see has become the norm of very stringent guidelines that the local authority and the Arts Council set in order to qualify for any subsidy towards the running of our Society. One huge drain on our resources was the need to 'stiffen' certain sections of the orchestra by buying in professional players for most of our performances and we were not favourite customers with the bank! We had even reached the point where our Chairman at the time had paid her own money into our funds in order to keep us afloat!

One of the first things we noticed after Brian arrived on the scene was that he was able to attract a significant number of well qualified musicians who were prepared to become members of the orchestra. They attended rehearsals like everybody else and had a twofold effect. Firstly we became more manageable financially but more importantly, these players helped to raise the standard of performance of their colleagues.

Needless to say that as a consequence we were able to also increase our membership and get more 'bums on seats' for our concerts. Brian has not only attracted more and better players to the orchestra but he has been able also to attract soloists of world renown to play with us. We owe him a great debt of gratitude and we offer our sincere congratulations on his anniversary. *Jose and Roy Latham*



It's a bit dark in the auditorium,  
but there's lots of audience  
(2009)

During our 12 year stint as Membership Secretaries we witnessed an ageing, declining membership, a focus on young musicians (and their youthful supporters) and an enduring support for improving playing standards across the orchestra. Brian was unable to arrest the passage of time, but made significant contributions in fostering both youthful soloists and players, and improved musicianship across all sections. We do recall the largest attendances often were for more 'populist pieces' and we suspect that this still applies today. With best wishes from *Anna and Malcolm Withnall*

Our involvement with the Orchestra was very much on the periphery, as we were not orchestral players, but we would want all concerned to give our sincere thanks to Brian for all that he has done for the Orchestra over a quarter of a century. It is not just standing on the rostrum and waving his arms (which he does very well!) - it is a huge amount of time and effort that he has put in behind the scenes on choosing the music for the concerts, putting together the programmes and arranging the printing of them and a wealth of other things that he looks after that many of the players and audience would not be aware of. He is certainly not just "the conductor". All of these less obvious matters help to ensure that MSO runs as well as it does. Happy birthday Brian! *Jane and Alan Veal*

## The Friends

I have attended most concerts given by the Maidstone Symphony Orchestra since 1974, when my wife Jane joined the orchestra. The opening concert then was usually given by the London Mozart players and one of the visiting conductors was Jane Glover. About this time the amount of financial assistance which the Society received was contracting. It was clear that this income needed to be replaced if the society was to continue to flourish. Irrespective of funds which continue to be received from elsewhere, I suggested to a group of committee members that we should launch a parallel charity to be known as the Friends of Maidstone Symphony Orchestra to which subscriptions could be invited. The idea was that the income from the capital endowment could be used to replace the loss of financial assistance lost by the withdrawal of public funds. The Friends still fulfil this role. *Martin Sankey*

Over the 30 years I have been involved with MOS, I witnessed a tremendous improvement in the standard of performance under Brian's stewardship!

As a Lecturer in Photography applied to Graphic Design (in a previous era), I have also been very impressed with Brian's talents and enthusiasm for Graphic Design with regard to MOS publications. *John Lewis*

Congratulations and very best wishes on this special occasion from *Richard Ashby* on behalf of all the Friends.

## Appreciative audience

Having played in MSO under his predecessor, I could not doubt that under Brian Wright the quality of performance has risen markedly. We must applaud Brian for what he has achieved for MSO and for concert goers who live within reach of Maidstone - and for adding a memorable page to the long and worthy history of Maidstone Symphony Orchestra. *Don Goodsell*

I was so grateful, when head at Skinners', for the wonderful opportunities you gave the boys to come to sing in the Albert Hall at your Christmas time concerts. It was something which in later years they often mentioned as one of their great school time experiences. Since 2006 Julia and I have been regular and appreciative attendees at the MSO concerts. Those of us who live in the area are so lucky to have this precious orchestra, and the concerts are highlights of the year for so many of us. Thank you for all you do, and I do hope that you too will much enjoy the special Birthday Concert! *Peter Braggins*

In about 1974 Sheila Dillon, a violin teacher at Kent Music School, who played in the Maidstone Symphony Orchestra and with whom I made music locally, suggested that I should join the orchestra. It was the beginning of the thrill of 40 years playing in the orchestra, playing under Bela and Brian Wright. The experience and opportunity to play many wonderful works has been one of the great joys of life for me. In 1979 a young Simon Rattle was the conductor of a concert given at the beginning of the season by the English Chamber Orchestra. Several times in the late 70s we had the opportunity to provide the orchestra for the British and Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind's annual performance of the Messiah at the Albert Hall. One of these Messiah's was conducted by you, Brian, and the choir was provided by Kent schools and amateur choirs from the county. My memories could go on and on to talk about the exciting adventurous programmes chosen by you. What a privilege it has been to play such a variety of works – a huge thank you, Brian, for 25 years of music making. *Jane Sankey*

I'm David Coles and although I'm not a member of your audience, I would like to send best wishes from Boscastle, North Cornwall. Maybe you remember me playing the double bass for the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society with the likes of Susan and Roger Smith under Trevor Harvey? I believe you were studying the bass at that time. I now play in two North Devon orchestras with Jen. Many congratulations on your 25 years with MSO and on your 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

## ..and from the Mayors

It is with great pleasure that I can comment on this auspicious occasion. Brian has given so much to this orchestra for so many years - and his dedication to its performance is rewarded by some outstanding programmes with brilliant soloists. Many of these are in their very early careers and we need to thank Brian for encouraging such talent for our enjoyment.

Who needs to travel to London when we have this remarkable community orchestra here on our doorstep?

'Happy Birthday' Brian - from one who is jealous of your youth!! I wish you many more years of these wonderful evenings together.

*Dan Daley* - Maidstone's Millennial Mayor.

This year's programme of concerts brings me utter joy in the fact that the orchestra will perform at least seven of my very favourite pieces. That's what I call an answer to prayer! Ecstasy will be the order of the evening in February: Weber, Beethoven and Brahms in one outing – who could ask for more? !!

David with the Mayor in November 2009,  
Peter Parvin



In 2005 when I was the Mayor of Maidstone, I was invited to my first MSO concert by David King. A decade later I am still there. There is a familiar pageant to the start of each concert; Brian wearing a formal coat makes his entrance and gives a cheerful speech of welcome. He then withdraws before a formal entrance to conduct the orchestra. This is almost a visual and balletic performance where he shows every note and cadence, before sweeping the orchestra along to a crescendo. It is now our turn to say, Happy Birthday and thank you. With my very best wishes, *John Horne*



Here are 2 photos from 2003, as you appeared in the brochure, and talking to Ulf (with Bro talking German to Hanne!)

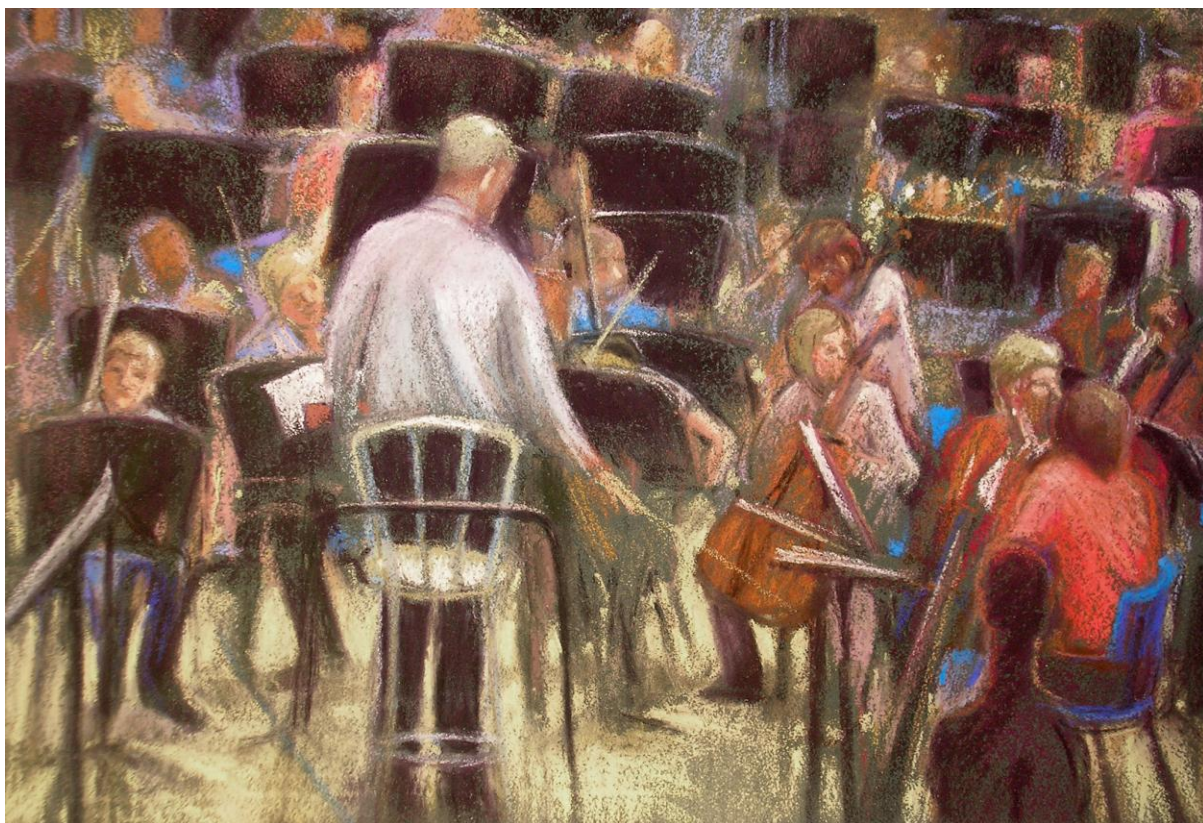


We have tried to contact Ulf for a contribution to this booklet, but unfortunately without success



## Our thanks

Emma Abnett, whose pictures appear in several places in this booklet, wrote in 2003 that she was “full of admiration for the whole orchestra, and of Brian, an amazingly difficult person to draw as he is the most mobile.” Emma is now a full-time carer for her husband, Peter, but she gave us permission to use the pictures and sends her very best wishes for your 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Our very grateful thanks to Emma.



Thanks to everyone who took photos of the individual sections at rehearsals (without Brian's knowledge!). Also, our sincere thanks to John Lewis for allowing us to use his wonderful photos (taken mainly at rehearsals with Brian's permission!) throughout this booklet, which was compiled by Janet Ash.

