

Introduce yourself!

Hello, everyone, I'm Colin Suckling and I'm a member of the horn section of the DCB. We fit in the middle pitch and sonority range of the Band's instruments and listen attentively to everyone else whilst we accompany, double with the saxophones (!), and occasionally have a show moment with a 'wide open spaces' tune or a character solo. Taking everything together, it's a great part to play for the Band.



How long have you been a member?

I joined the DCB in 2010, when I stepped down as conductor of the University of Strathclyde Concert Band.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

Away from music, I'm a professional organic chemist. I've worked at the University of Strathclyde and lived in Bearsden with my violin and viola playing wife, Catherine, since 1972. Current scientific research is seeking to discover new anti-infective drugs, appropriately for a time of pandemic, and we have one antibacterial compound going well in a clinical trial. Music has always been my escape from academic and scientific work so it's probably not surprising that our three children have all turned out to be professional musicians, even though the eldest got a science degree on the way. I taught myself to arrange music and then to compose in order to have pieces that the very mixed and patchy instrumentation of the new Strathclyde University Concert Band (1990) could play. Real composers have arranged JS Bach as part of their development but for me, it was Scott Joplin. The DCB has played one of these arrangements, 'The Stop Time Rag'. Playing the horn has made some special things possible for me, such as taking part in some of the first post-war performances of the big Mahler Symphonies in the 1960s with the RLPO. Being an academic scientist has also taken me into some surprising situations, such as having dinner with Stalin's son-in-law in the last year of Soviet Russia, and at the other end of the global political spectrum, giving evidence in a US Federal Court in Las Vegas, Nevada. Like most people who go to Vegas, we lost.

What other instruments do you play?

These days I don't play anything other than the horn to public performance standard. When I was at school and a student, I did a lot of recorder consort playing. On one occasion each I have played in public the piano, the viola, and the bass drum. Of these, the bass drum in Bernstein's Chichester Psalms was much the most effective and rewarding!



Is there another instrument you would like to play?

The good thing about playing the horn is that I can use a very effective practice mute that plugs into a wee box with an amplifier, the output of which feeds my headphones. If I tried to play anything else the noise would be most unwelcome all round.

What do you enjoy most about DCB?

Musically, it's the huge range of styles that we tackle. Personally, it's the teamwork that goes into making a really good band. You can't play well unless you're happy playing together.

Favourite concert venue – past, present..... or future?

Undoubtedly my favourite was Kelvingrove Museum for the space, the sound, the audience, and the fun of the Christmas Music. I'm looking forward to the DCB setting up in the Kessington Hall.

Favourite DCB memory?

If I'm allowed two: the Schladming and Landeck trips. In particular, Bier und Wurst in the Augustiner-Keller in Munich and Apfelstrudel on the terrace at the top of the Dachstein.

**Favourite piece we've played?**

Very hard to choose just one, because as I noted above, the wide range of styles makes the DCB such an exciting band to be part of. However, if I can pick one for suiting the DCB sound, being a really good composition, and having an immediate emotional impact, it would be 'Horkstow Grange' from Percy Grainger's 'Lincolnshire Posy'.

Any piece you'd like to play with the band in the future?

I'm very much looking forward to playing my new piece, The Bearsden Bears, written during lockdown, suggested by the bears in the windows during May 2020.

**Have you done anything exciting during lockdowns (other than lots of music practice – obviously!!) – learned a new skill or decided to get back into an old hobby for example?**

I think that the things I would not have done if it had not been for lockdown are the new bits of music, recording clips from the horn section, some videos for the Helensburgh Orchestral Society, and, of course, composing The Bearsden Bears. I've also discovered every footpath in Bearsden and Milngavie, meanwhile.

Looking forward to getting back to rehearsals?

It will be wonderful to play with others again and to give the sound space.