

Introduce yourself!

I'm Jonathan and I play the bassoon.

How long have you been a member?

It was in the afternoon of Saturday 19th December 2009 that I got a call from Clare Rankin, who played horn with DCB at the time, to ask if I would play in the concert that evening. I'd played with the Helensburgh Orchestra for a few years and knew Robert and had heard good things about DCB so I agreed. Clare drove us to Milngavie Town Hall for the concert, Robert gave me a 2 or 3 minute run through of the tricky corners and then we went straight into the concert. I didn't seem to disgrace myself and was hugely flattered when at the end of the concert Harriet, who was sitting next to me playing bass clarinet, asked if I was professional! I've been a member of DCB ever since.



What other instruments do you play?

I started learning piano at the age of 12 and was taught by our school French master who was also a fine pianist. A couple of years later I opted to take Music 'O' Level partly because it got us out of square bashing on Friday afternoons with the school corps but mostly because it involved playing music with the other 8 or 9 pupils in the class. I still play piano but only for my own enjoyment - if others are listening it spoils the fun for me and it's not much fun for them either. Recorder consorts introduced me to wind instruments but I found that this didn't really satisfy my desire for music making. At the time Hilary and I went regularly to Halle Orchestra concerts in Manchester and I really wanted to be part of making that glorious orchestral sound myself. So in my late 20's I got in touch with Charles Cracknell, the Halle Principal bassoon at the time, who chose an instrument for me and got me under way. I still remember many of the things he told me to aim for although at the time I couldn't do most of them!

Is there another instrument you would like to play?

As a young church chorister I wanted to play the organ but was told that I should learn piano first. I never progressed to the organ and I don't think that it's going to happen now!

What do you enjoy most about DCB?

There isn't a short answer to this question. What I enjoy most is the whole ethos of the band and by that I mean everything from the warmth of the welcome we give new players, the wide ranges of ages, backgrounds and playing abilities, the huge range of music we play, all the different venues where we perform and the audiences we play to, the musical leadership and encouragement we get from Robert and Michelle, but above all the sense that we are a 'family'. Ok, so there's a bit of bickering from time to time but we all look out for each other and we all love making music.



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

Kelvingrove was always one of my favourites because it was such a family friendly occasion and for me marked the start of Christmas. I'm looking forward to hearing what Kessington Hall will be like but in the future maybe we could give a concert in the new RSNO Centre or perhaps even the City Halls?

Favourite DCB memory?

Definitely the Schladming trip! Such a wonderful combination of concerts - especially the Nuremberg one, Alpine scenery, brilliant warm weather - I can vividly recall walking out of Munich airport into the glorious sunshine, the fantastic organisational skills of those who planned, prepared and led the tour and of course time to get to know other band members. There've been other great trips too but for me Schladming stands out.

Favourite piece we've played?

We've played lots of wonderful music over the last 10 years and it seems to me that DCB excels at the big scale, narrative pieces by Rossano Galante such as 'Cry of the Last Unicorn'. However, my favourite is 'Out of Africa'. Having spent most of my early childhood in Uganda it just takes me back to wide open savannah, big skies and endless days of sunshine - it brings to mind the observation that 'music is the closest we have to a time machine'.



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?

To my mind the words 'lockdown' and 'excitement' don't go together. However, like many people, I've become familiar with Zoom both for 'work' meetings and family get togethers, I've worked my way through the home project list faster than I would otherwise have done and walked much further than in pre-pandemic years. I've also probably made enough bassoon reeds to last the rest of my playing days!

Looking forward to getting back to rehearsals?

The online rehearsals with DCB, and the Helensburgh Orchestra, have provided plenty of incentive to keep playing and have been a great way of keeping in touch but of course I'm really looking forward to sitting alongside friends in the band again although I've no idea what those first few bars are going to sound like!