



The Oasby Music Group

The story so far!

The Oasby Music Group has just celebrated its 5th anniversary, with 12 different ensembles of all ages (the youngest musician was 5, the eldest 19) performing a vast range of repertoire to a packed audience.

It all began back in 2013 when the Oasby Music Group was founded by violin teacher Laura Gardiner. In the very first group, there were 7 young string players, all of whom are still members. Today there are 75 players in the Oasby Music Group.

Growing up in Ayrshire and learning Suzuki violin with Brenda Smith, Laura and numerous other children including Nicola Benedetti benefited enormously from the group sessions and holiday workshops their teacher provided for them.

Inspired by the dedication and commitment of Brenda to give the best opportunities for her pupils, Laura based the Oasby Music Group on a model that worked for her, growing up as a young musician in Scotland. She has built on it and developed it in her own way, drawing further inspiration from another major influence, Vivienne Price, founder of the National Children's Orchestras. It is no coincidence that so many of the children are full or associate members of the NCO. In 2018, 20 OMG members are a part of NCO-GB.



As a classroom teacher lucky enough to begin work in a very musical (and therefore very rare) state primary school, Laura was immediately aware of the massive differences in the musical experiences of children at different schools – even in the same area. The Oasby Music Group aims to offer a high level of music education independent of such arbitrary variation, and accessible to as many children as possible.

The children have always supported one another as well. OMG really is a group you belong to. Everyone is needed for rehearsals and performances – especially in small ensembles – and children make a commitment to their chamber playing and to one another. And from the camaraderie of performing together, comes generosity about solo performances – even when one inevitably scores higher than another in an exam or competition. No, playing chamber music doesn't turn children into angels – but it does help them find ways to get along!

Ensemble playing is the essence of belonging to OMG from the moment the youngest players join. As children progress through the graded ensembles, playing more and more demanding repertoire, they still return to the more elementary groups to act as mentors - typically standing behind the younger players, playing parts with them and pointing out notes on the music if they get lost. At the recent anniversary concert, the original members of the Oasby Music Group stood with the current youngest players and performed side by side.

It is worth reflecting on some of the achievements of the original members in the past 5 years. Setting aside some impressive exam results and festival appearances, all 7 became full members of the National Children's Orchestras; 3 performed with Nicola Benedetti in a concert on her Four Seasons Tour; 2 have played in the Chineke! Junior Orchestra and have places in the National Children's Chamber Orchestra; 1 was named Lincolnshire Primary Young Performer 2017; 1 has been awarded a place at music school; 1 now studies with a world-class teacher and has given a solo recital; and 4 are this year's National Under-12 Chamber Music Champions. That's a hard act to follow, but none of them knew they were going to be any good when they first played together aged between 4 and 8. So OMG's current youngest players have every reason to aim high - everything to play for, and everything to practise for.

From the very first Summer, OMG has run school holiday courses open to all young string players. We have had tutors from the Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, Trinity Conservatoire, National Conservatoire of Scotland and Birmingham Conservatoire; but we also draw on the considerable music teaching talent and experience available locally. We've involved year-12 and 13 musicians as mentors and three of these mentors are now all studying music at conservatoire and university and regularly return to tutor the current OMG members. The mentor scheme is currently being widened and developed to include our younger students as well. Special events have included percussion workshops with the Principal Percussionist of Opera North, and coaching from both the Villiers String Quartet and The Stringcredibles; and of course, the most special event of all was when Nicola Benedetti and Leonard Elschenbroich came to work with the children last autumn.

Looking to the future, amongst other things in the diary, OMG is running three Summer courses for Beginners, Junior and Senior players open to all and the ensemble groups will be working with Tasmin Little and Jonathan Bloxham in early 2019 and later in the year with the Carducci Quartet. They are also about to embark on their first international tour, taking the two most advanced ensembles to Belgium in February 2019.

We're bound to wonder what the group will look like in five years' time. Who knows? One thing we can say for sure: five years ago, nobody would have predicted anything like this!





Tour Programme – Oasby Music Group Magic and Mystery

Saint-Saens Danse Macabre,
Mozart - Overture to The Magic Flute
Night at the Museum
Alice in Wonderland
Grieg - Peer Gynt Suite Extracts
Mussorgsky - Night on Bald Mountain
Music from Enchanted
The Pink Panther

The group will need:

- 43 chairs with no arm rest
- Electricity power point for the instruments and PA
- 70min concert

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