

Oasby Music Group! Five years on...
17th March 2018
Ruth Holmes

Oasby Music Group (OMG) celebrated its fifth birthday in style with an inspirational afternoon at St Wulfram's Church on Saturday, 17 March.



Fresh from a dizzying number of ensemble and solo successes at the recent Grantham, Lincoln and Colsterworth Music Festivals, the 62-strong group under the tutelage of Laura Gardiner delivered truly remarkable performances in a packed programme that belied the group's average age of 10.

Opening this celebratory fifth anniversary concert, the Minims ensemble – the most experienced players at OMG, aged from just 9 to 17 – reprised their Grantham Music Festival record-high-scoring *West Side Story* medley.



In this centenary year of the acclaimed composer's life, the young musicians offered an arresting tribute to Bernstein's vivid musical. Listening, I found it genuinely hard to believe these 22 violin, viola and cello players, a pianist and one percussionist could create such a full, detailed and multi-layered sound evocative of a full orchestra, let alone all be of school age.



Age-defying performances

Following this flawless start were OMG's Quavers ensemble – 18 of the group's younger violin and viola players. Quavers had a tough act to follow. Yet, their rousing 'Ode to Joy' and 'Themes from Harry Potter' did not miss a beat, continuing the exceptionally high standard set.

Credit to the passion and rigour of Laura Gardiner's early instilling of solid musicianship, these younger students took the lead from their more experienced peers, running with it to provide another on-point, richly toned and age-defying performance.



Celebrating five years

This quality hallmarked every one of the 26 pieces billed, which also brought many poignant moments.

As well as first public outings for some of the OMG trios, quartets and smaller ensembles, Saturday's concert took place exactly five years to the day since OMG's debut performance at Heydour Church.



Rekindling those memories – and honouring OMG's practice of senior members mentoring and working side-by-side with junior members – the 7 original OMG students joined with the group's newest players, Semiquavers, to reprise those very first Suzuki pieces.

Considering just five years' dedicated playing separates these Minims from the Semiquavers, it is evident every one of those five years has been well spent.

In this short space of time, many OMG members across all three groups Quavers, Crochets and Minims have won national competitions and achieved selection for county, regional and national orchestras. These young players are also clearly developing key life skills, including self-discipline, teamwork, determination and commitment.



OMG's Crochets' energetic and accomplished performance of Prokofiev's stirring 'Montagues and Capulets', and themes from *Pirates of the Caribbean* demonstrated all these qualities beyond doubt.



Ending on a high

As with all big birthdays, especially those celebrated on St Patrick's Day, it was fitting to end this musical festivity with a party.

Following Crochets' nautical theme, the Minims' performed Gaelic Storm's 'An Irish Party in Third Class'. This prompted a standing ovation, encore and enthusiastic audience involvement, showing yet again there was nothing below par about this piece. The audience enjoyed first-class all the way this afternoon in St Wulfram's.



Where will the next port of call be in five years' time for Laura Gardiner and her Oasby Music Group, its up-and-coming musicians and future alumni? One thing is for sure: with concerts like these, it's definitely worth getting onboard to find out.

