

Head's Lines - Gerard Booth - Director of Music



Welcome to this latest edition of the Oldham Music Service and Music Centre's regular newsletter. This is a particularly poignant edition of Music Notes for me, marking my final 'Head's Lines', as I will be taking retirement before the end of January. It has been my honour and privilege to lead Oldham's Music Service since 2010 and to have been a member of this exceptional team since I first joined the Service as a brass teacher in 1993.

In the 32 years that I have been a part of this exceptional organisation I have been lucky to take part in its journey from a relatively small Music Service through to the successful and professional provider of Music Education that it is today. Of course, there have been many highlights throughout the years. These have included numerous foreign and domestic tours, including the one to New York that I led in 2008 and the subsequent one that I participated in as a member of staff in 2014. We have also visited lots of European destinations with Music Centre groups in my time, the most memorable ones being Prague, Italy, Belgium and France. I can say with absolute confidence that these tours remain as some of the fondest memories for both the students and staff that participated in them.

As you would also expect, there have also been literally hundreds of amazing performances given by Music Centre groups in Oldham and the rest of the UK during the three decades plus that I have been a member of the Music Centre team. Some particularly memorable ones for me personally come from nearly two decades as conductor of the Youth Orchestra in which the ensemble performed many times at the country's most prestigious venues – The Royal Festival Hall, Bridgewater Hall, Media City, Birmingham's Symphony Hall and, perhaps most memorable of all, at the Royal Albert Hall in November 2019 in the Schools' Proms. Other memories include the Youth Orchestra's Brass Ensemble playing in the Millenium Dome, as it was then called back at the turn of the century, and also playing tuba with the Youth Brass Band on a boat sailing down the Thames past the Houses of Parliament in the 1990's as we marked the 150th anniversary of the Borough of Oldham! I have also been delighted to witness and support the amazing achievements of our other flagship instrumental groups, the Youth Brass Band, initially under Martyn Evans and latterly, Jonathan Leedale, and Youth Wind Band under Roger Meaden and most recently, Duncan Byers, both groups having similarly outstanding records of achievement and many awards and prizes to celebrate.

During my time as Head of Service I have been proud to have had a role in expanding the work of the Music Centre to include lots of new strands and to make the Service's offer much wider than ever before. Through the work of Dennis Hadfield and others, we have massively expanded our reach in the field of popular music and especially electric guitar. We have also introduced the hugely popular and successful Musical Theatre groups which continue to deliver outstanding results at every performance. Another big move has been the introduction of groups for adults – the Community Choir, two Wind Bands and guitar and ukulele groups, all of which continue to thrive and which clearly get better and better year upon year.

Of course, there have been challenges, the most obvious of which was the COVID19 Pandemic. However, there have been plenty of others, such as the continual squeeze on public finances which have made it harder and harder for organisations such as the Council and the Music Service to deliver the incredible opportunities that we're rightly known for to all of our musicians. We have seen the transition from a direct funding model change to a commercial one through the Local Management of Schools in 1994, the loss of Standards Funding in the 21st Century and the continual shake up of education for as long as I can remember. Despite all of this, the amazing team of Music Centre teachers always rise to all of these difficulties and, it is in the most part due to their exceptional and unwavering commitment through it all, that OMS has remained at the forefront of music education in the region and nationally.

Any member of the Music Centre team will rightly tell you, the greatest reward of our work is knowing that all of the team's efforts have resulted in life-enhancing experiences for countless thousands of Oldhamers. Some of those benefits will be tiny and hard to quantify, but for many hundreds if not thousands of others,

Many musicians... one harmony

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they will be profound and will continue to benefit them long after their time at the Music Centre or with Music Service teachers in schools has ended. I am proud of what the Music Service stands for and what it continues to achieve and I know that it will keep delivering these exceptional outcomes for many thousands of children and adults for years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my incredible colleagues at the Music Centre, teachers and support staff alike, my colleagues within Oldham Council and the borough's schools, Music Centre members and their families and the very many supporters that we have across the borough for all that they have done and continue to do to ensure the ongoing musical successes of the Music Service and its performers. This is a very special musical 'family' and one that I hope Oldhamers will always cherish and support.

Christmas Performances



December was a busy time for our staff and students. Our traditional, seasonal performances began with the Pop Department 'Mince Pie Gig' at the Lyceum which featured a variety of student and adult groups.

The Junior Ensembles and Choirs plus Repercussions entertained a packed-out audience at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 3rd December. For some children, this was their first public performance. An incredible achievement after only one term of Music Centre membership.



The Youth Wind Band, Youth Brass Band, Youth Orchestra and Youth and Intermediate Choirs were joined by the Adult Choir for yet another sensational and memorable Christmas Festival on 4th December.



Intermediate Choir and Vocal Recall performed in the Age UK Oldham Christmas Carol Concert at George Street Chapel.

The Adult Choir, Wind Band and Late Start Wind Band entertained the audience at Royton Band Club on 18th December. This is the first time the Adult Groups have performed there but it's certainly venue they will be returning to.



And thank you to members of the Youth Ensembles, staff, FFOMC and parents/carers who gave up their time for carolling at Tesco. FFOMC raised over £1200 towards the Heidelberg Tour.

Photographs from all our Christmas Concerts are available to view via our [FLICKR](#) Album

The Snowman

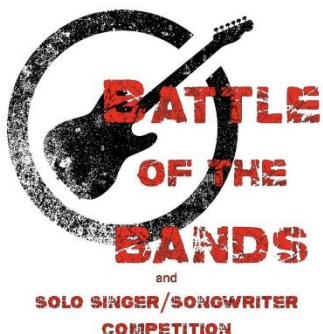
Over 800 children from Oldham schools attended the screening of 'The Snowman' accompanied by live orchestra from Carrot Productions. Two children from Oldham schools featured as soloists. Poppy sang the iconic 'Walking in the Air' solo. Willow opened the concert with 'Once in Royal David's City'. They were both amazing! The opportunity to attend this performance free of charge is one of the many benefits on offer to schools which subscribe to the DMG.



Christmas Parties: Thank you FFOMC!

The Families and Friends of Oldham Music Centre (FFOMC) exists to support the work of the Music Centre. The Junior and Intermediate ensembles had a fabulous time at their end-of-term parties. Treats and prizes were provided by FFOMC. Thank you also to the staff who organised the parties. One of the many benefits of music-making with others is the opportunity it provides to form and develop friendships and to provide lasting happy memories. We are grateful to FFOMC for the time and effort they put into fundraising.

Battle of the Bands and Solo Singer/Songwriter Competition



Each year, young musicians from Oldham secondary schools compete in the Oldham Battle of the Bands. The winner from this event will go on to represent Oldham at the Greater Manchester Music Hub event at Band on the Wall later in the year.

This year's event will be held on **Saturday 1st February** at Boarshurst Band Club from 5pm.

For further details and an entry form, contact andy.bergin@oldham.gov.uk

Musical Theatre Showcase



The Musical Theatre students provided a wonderful evening of performances from a variety of musicals at the annual Showcase.

Held at NWTAC Theatre, this event was an opportunity for our students to dazzle and impress an appreciative audience in a professional theatre setting.



Can you support FFOMC?

A Music Centre parent has recently offset his workplace volunteering hours for a £600 financial donation to FFOMC from his employer. Many companies do offer financial support for charities. Does your employer do so and would you be willing to support the work of FFOMC in this way?

Recent projects supported by FFOMC include:

- The Christmas Parties for Junior & Intermediate groups
- Excursions on the Heidelberg Tour
- The Monday Music Group for children with SEND
- Bursaries for Music Centre Membership Fees for families who face financial barriers
- £2000 of equipment for the Pop Department

Make a donation:



<https://bit.ly/FFOMCdonate>

If you are able to support FFOMC by making a donation, sponsoring an event or providing match-funding for an event, please get in touch info@ffomc.co.uk or you can donate using the link.

Vocal Health First Aider



Congratulations to Hannah Davis who is now a qualified Vocal Health First Aider. Hannah is one of our Voice and Curriculum teachers and will support our Music Service staff and singing students to know how to prevent vocal health issues from occurring and to spot the signs of vocal dysfunction and imbalance. She will be able to guide staff and students in self-management and signpost them to further support which may include specialist vocal rehabilitation coaching or clinical treatment.

Hannah will be leading a session on Vocal Health at the upcoming Primary Music Conference on Thursday 13th March. Contact musicservice@oldham.gov.uk to book your place.

Student Spotlight: Maia Biddle-Mogg

This regular feature of our newsletter is an insight into the musical journey of one of our Oldham Music Centre students. This edition features Maia who is the principal violinist in the Youth Orchestra.

I started playing the violin when I was seven after seeing a classical group come to perform at my primary school, offering lessons to students. I didn't know at that point that I'd carry on ten years later or that I'd have the opportunities playing the violin has given me. I joined the Oldham Music Service when I was twelve, wanting to branch out from my local community and play more challenging pieces. This definitely was the case, though the challenge certainly benefited me. Since then, I've toured Belgium, achieved my Grade 8, become principal violinist, played annually at the Bridgewater Hall and most recently, with my college orchestra - won the Music For Youth competition and played at the Royal Albert Hall. Without the violin, I wouldn't have been offered these amazing opportunities or met such amazing players and friends. Because of this, I've gained confidence in all aspects of life and look forward to continuing playing violin at university next year where I'll hopefully begin my next step to becoming a journalist.



The Wind in the Willows

The Wind in the Willows project is a collaborative performance featuring choirs from the Greater Manchester and Blackburn with Darwen Music Hub (GMBD Hub), including our own Oldham Music Centre Youth Choir led by Mrs Nixon. The work, composed by Neil Brand, will be performed with orchestra and a line-up of experienced actors taking the lead roles. Matthew Roughley (Hallé Choirs) will be the choral conductor. This is a fantastic experience for our Youth Choir and we are delighted to have been invited to participate and represent Oldham at such a prestigious event. Tickets for the performance at the Bridgewater Hall are available here: [Greater Manchester and Blackburn with Darwen Music Hub | The Bridgewater Hall](#)

Oldham Schools Music Festival: 30th June-2nd July

The Oldham Schools' Music Festival has been an annual feature of the musical life of the borough and educational community for generations and has a special place within the Music Centre's calendar of events. Many generations of young musicians have taken part in this celebration of Oldham's musical talent over more than four decades. The scope of its inclusivity, both in terms of the level of experience and ability of performers and the range and diversity of the musical genres on display, is exceptional and unique. Schools should put this date in their diaries now. Further details to follow soon!

Starter Strings for children in Y3-6 - it's FREE!

There's still time to register for our amazing **free** Starter Strings group for years 3-6. It is on Wednesdays from 5:15-6:15pm, so your child will be able to attend Junior Choir first. This is an amazing musical opportunity, many of last year's 'graduates' are now playing in the Strings Workshop ensemble and are having ongoing lessons at the Music Centre.

All necessary resources and instruments are provided.

If you want any further information, please email richard.lord@oldham.gov.uk at the music centre. We can't wait to see you there! Register here: www.oldham.gov.uk/music_centre_application

CPD for School Staff

Our CPD programme develops and extends the musical skills of teachers and practitioners by supporting you in delivering a high-quality music curriculum. Practical, engaging and excellent value for money; our courses are guaranteed to provide a wealth of knowledge and expertise which will have a real impact upon pupils' learning, engagement and progression.

Oldham Primary Music Conference: Thursday 13th March (all day)

Booking for the annual **Oldham Primary Music Conference** is now open. The conference will take place on **Thursday 13th March 8.45am-3pm** at the Lyceum. The conference is an opportunity to discover new resources, develop your Music teaching knowledge and skills and to network with colleagues. There will be a variety of workshops to choose from. Whether you are a Music Lead, non-specialist, a class teacher, a TA or a trainee, the conference has something for everyone.

Lunch is included. £50 for DMG schools, £80 for non-DMG, FREE for PGCE trainees in Oldham schools.

Contact musicservice@oldham.gov.uk for a booking form or [visit our website](#) and download it [here](#)

Primary Music Network

Book your FREE place here: <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/DSUB> or scan the QR code



Tuesday 28th January 2025 4pm-5.30pm

How to Integrate Music into a Class Topic

Tuesday 29th April 4pm-5.30pm

Singing Games & Rhymes: Develop aural, rhythm and singing skills through play. Ideas to interweave in your curriculum for EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

Tuesday 20th May 4pm-5.30pm

Rhythmic Notation: How to read it and how to teach it well.

Sparkyard Music Curriculum: special offer



SPARKYARD

Special Offer
30% off Subscription for
all Oldham Schools.
Use code 24OLDHAM30

We have teamed up with Out of the Ark Music to offer a 30% discount on a Sparkyard Subscription for all Oldham schools. Find out more here: [Start Your Free Trial Now! | Sparkyard](#)

Don't forget to use the discount code 24OLDHAM30

Music Group for children with SEND (8-13 years old)

Mondays 5.30pm-6.30pm *Free to attend – funded by the Families & Friends of Oldham Music Centre*

Come along to

- explore and learn to play a musical instrument, find your singing voice
- create music with other young people in a group
- have fun
- develop your self-confidence



SCAN ME

Venue: Oldham Music Centre, Lyceum Building, Union Street, Oldham OL1 1QG

Register: www.oldham.gov.uk/music_centre_application Or scan the QR code

Join a Music Centre Choir



Recruitment is ongoing for all our Music Centre choirs. We cater for singers of all ages. No previous experience necessary, just lots of enthusiasm!

For children, the period from their first attendance until the end of that same term is a **free trial period** so there has never been a better time to join us!

| Junior Choir | Vocal Recall* | Intermediate Choir | Oldham Youth Choir | Adult Choir |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Y3-Y5 Boys & Girls</i> | <i>KS2 & KS3 Boys</i> | <i>Y6-Y9 Boys & Girls</i> | <i>KS4/5 Mixed Voices</i> | <i>Adults</i> |
| Wednesday 4.15pm-5.15pm | Wednesday 5.15pm-5.45pm | Wednesday 5.45pm-6.45pm | Wednesday 6.15pm-7.45pm | Monday 7.15pm-8.45pm |

*Members of Vocal Recall must also join either Junior Choir or Intermediate Choir

To join one of our choirs, complete the online registration here: www.oldham.gov.uk/music_centre_application or scan the QR code



Musical Beginnings

If you have a child 0-4 years old, you may be interested in our Musical Beginnings sessions at the Lyceum. Currently only £63 per term, they are excellent value for money and very high quality.



We have various sessions throughout the week.

Monday 9.45am (0-4 years)

Monday 1pm (pre-school)

Tuesday 10.30am (0-4 years with SEND) **FREE of CHARGE**

Wednesday 10am (0-4 years)

Friday 10am (babies)

Friday 11am (toddlers)

Contact musicservice@oldham.gov.uk to find out more about any of our Musical Beginnings sessions.

Register online for these classes here www.oldham.gov.uk/music_centre_application or scan the QR code



Calendar of events

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| Saturday 11th January | Musical Theatre Showcase |
| Weds 5th February | Oldham Secondary Vocal Gala (Intermediate Choir) |
| Thursday 13th February | Youth Brass Band concert Royton Band Club |
| Thurs 13th-Sun 16th Feb | Wind in the Willows (Youth Choir) |
| Fri/Sat 7th/8th March | Music for Youth (Youth Choir plus other groups tbc) |
| Thursday 13th March | Oldham Primary Music Conference |
| Friday 14th March | Saddleworth MVC and Youth Choir (Friezland Church) |
| Monday 24th March | Departmental Concert: Wind |
| Tuesday 25th March | Departmental Concert: Strings |
| Wednesday 26th March | Departmental Concert: Voice |
| Wednesday 26th March | Biggest Band Day (invited pupils from primary schools) |
| Thursday 27th March | Departmental Concert: Brass |
| Thursday 27th March | Oldham Headteacher's Conference – Adv Musical Theatre |
| Friday 28th March | Adult Groups' Concert (venue tbc) |
| Saturday 29th March | National Youth Brass Band Championships, Hull |
| Friday 9th May | Youth Brass Band Concert at Brian Clarke Academy |
| Friday 13th June | Whit Friday (Youth Brass Band) |
| Mon 30th June-Tues 2nd July | Oldham Schools' Music Festival |
| Friday 4th July | Summer Festival (Pop Dept) |
| Saturday 5th July | Summer Festival (all Music Centre groups) |
| Saturday 19th July | Heidelberg Tour |

Keep in touch

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| Twitter: | @Oldhammusic |
| Facebook: | Oldham Council Music Service |
| Website: | www.oldhammusic-service.co.uk |
| Email: | musicservice@oldham.gov.uk |