

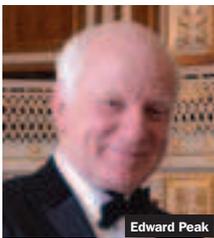
A Musical Recipe for Success



Take 55 classical musicians handpicked from various orchestras in the North West. Add to this one professional conductor and 45 soloists – these are of mixed varieties including pianists, violinists, opera singers, etc. Include a selection of some of the most exciting, thrilling and luscious music ever written and mix all of these ingredients together.

Spread the mix liberally over more than 220 concerts and events and ensure that some 30,000 people get to attend over a period of 10 years. The result is the musical phenomenon that is the Orchestra dell'Arte.

The origins of this remarkable ensemble go back to the first tentative beginnings of the Heswall Festival. It started when two old friends, conductor Edward Peak and professional engineer and keen musician Dr Valerie Warr met for coffee one day.



"I remember it as if it were yesterday," says Edward Peak, "we went into Valerie's kitchen and there on the table was a gigantic piece of paper with a circle drawn in the middle with the words 'Arts Festival' written inside it. Knowing Valerie for many years and knowing what a persuasive and indefatigable organiser she is I should have turned tail and run, but I am now very glad that I didn't!"

Edward was invited to write on that piece of paper events that could be included in an arts festival. Before too long, such subjects as music, poetry, sculpture, embroidery, theatre, flower arranging and pottery covered it. With further applications of coffee, the entire paper was soon filled to bursting.

The short version of the story is that this was the birth of the Heswall Festival – within the amazingly short time of six months, the first festival went ahead and featured 52 events in a 2-week period. The following year had 104 events in a fortnight!



The first Heswall Festival (since then grown and developed into the Wirral Arts Festival) featured a final concert. By virtue of many years playing in orchestras in the region, Valerie had built up a huge list of players with whom she had worked and this was the perfect time to call together the best of these musicians to form an ensemble for the festival finale. The concert was conducted by Edward – his many years as performer and conductor with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and as an arts presenter for the BBC being perfect credentials for being a steady hand on the musical tiller.

The event was a dazzling success and the performers were all keen to keep the ensemble together. It was obvious that something very special had happened and that here was a unique mix of conductor, players and great music. This combination of conductor and orchestra have ever since brought each year's festival to a rousing finish.

A suitably special title was needed and, very soon after, the new ensemble first appeared in public bearing the splendid new title of 'L'Orchestra dell'Arte'.

In their position as orchestra-in-residence, the Orchestra dell'Arte is delighted to have been given the title of St George's Hall Orchestra in recognition of their ongoing association with the magnificent neo-classical concert venue in Liverpool city centre.

Since taking up the position, Edward and the orchestra have performed 24 concerts at St George's featuring world-class soloists such as pianist Stephen Hough, violinists Wolfgang David and Ofer Falk, and opera star Kathryn Rudge.

The dell'Arte organisation isn't content merely to perform orchestral concerts – it also promotes two long-running series of chamber music concerts, in Heswall and at the Atkinson Centre in Southport. In addition, the full orchestra appears regularly at the Parkgate Proms.

In conjunction with Culture Liverpool, the orchestra inaugurated the UK's first classical music exchange scheme for the UNESCO Creative Cities of Music. Exchanges have already taken place with the cities of Bologna and Hannover – a further exchange is already fixed for the 2019/20 season.

To mark the tenth anniversary of the Orchestra dell'Arte, a very special programme of concerts has been arranged. Continuing with the practice of featuring top soloists, the orchestra will be welcoming the renowned British cellist Raphael Wallfisch who will join the orchestra at St George's on Sunday 22 September to play the cello concerto by Dvorak. The recording of the Dvorak concerto by Wallfisch has been described as the best recording of the work in 25 years – this concert is set to be a landmark in the North West music scene.

Even though Dvorak's concerto is perhaps the greatest work composed for the cello it had a less than auspicious beginning, being much revised and edited before it reached its final version. The great composer Johannes Brahms corrected the proofs for the concerto and professed himself a great admirer of the work – praise indeed.

The concert starts with the thrilling *Vienna Philharmonic Fanfare* by Richard Strauss. The orchestra started their first ever concert at St George's with this work and they felt it fitting to begin the anniversary year in the same way. Strauss's musical postcard work *Aus Italien* (From Italy) completes the programme.

Future concerts in the anniversary season will feature violinist Jack Liebeck who will play the violin concerto by Brahms and the tenth year is rounded off with a fully-staged performance of Puccini's magical opera *Madama Butterfly* – don't forget to bring the Kleenex!

Like buses, tenth anniversaries seem to appear together – not only is the Orchestra dell'Arte about to celebrate its tenth anniversary, but *Heswall Magazine* is also in the same very happy position.