

I feel a greater sense of normality coming on. During the past month, I have managed to conduct four rehearsals without any nasty side effects from the injuries sustained last year. Not that some of my musicians would even notice that I was waving a little white stick in front of them! Still, I hope it is all in a good cause. Last weekend we had a great turnout for a singing workshop focusing on the music of Puccini and singing through his much-neglected *Messa di Gloria*. The 40-minute work is being performed in April by Stour Choral Society and Trianon Music Group in separate concerts, so watch this space because it is a good opportunity to pay tribute to a composer who has been described by one critic as the Charles Dickens of music – exploring what ordinary people do, focusing on low life, and the pain that comes with passion.

Young musicians are very much in this week's spotlight – and so they should be. The state school that my grandson attends in Australia has three bands, but I wonder how many state schools in this country can manage even one band. Music is so neglected now in schools, forming as it does the soft underbelly of the curriculum, and yet it provides as much exercise and discipline as do sports. When I think about it, the secondary school I attended (naming no names) always highlighted the exploits of their sportspeople, but the musicians. well, they were always considered a rather weird bunch. Over sixty years on, I notice that reunions of said cohort still seem to be dominated by talk of sports.



Ipswich School pupils. Credit: Ipswich School.

This coming Thursday, 8 February, students from the Ipswich School provide the Ipswich Town Concert starting at 1pm and lasting for 50 minutes. This is the first time that the school has been so represented in the series, and I am delighted that they come to support the concert series organised by Ipswich Arts Association. The programme is being given at Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich. Admission is free as usual, but there is a retiring collection. Refreshments are available from 12.30pm.



*Young musician Kea Emina plays guitar solo.
Credit: Alice Ridley.*

I am even more pleased that one student will be soloist when the strings of Trianon give a concert on Saturday 10 February at 4pm in St Margaret's Church, Soane Street, Ipswich. Kea Emina will not only be playing double-bass with the strings but also two spots with guitar music by Bach and Villa-Lobos. Since picking up the ukulele at aged 5 it was clear that Kea had a talent as an instrumentalist. In the years since, music has been at the centre of his young life, playing classical guitar, double bass, electric bass guitar and is now tackling the piano. He is an Aldeburgh Young Musician and has been playing double bass with the Trianon Orchestra for two years. His

ambition is to play the *Concierto de Aranjuez* with a full orchestra one day. Saturday's concert lasts about one hour. Admission is free but there is a retiring collection for church funds, and refreshments will be available after the programme.

This year we remember Puccini, particularly since he died 100 years ago. He is one of the featured composers in a double CD album from Decca Records with Andre Bocelli performing in New York's Central Park. CD1 is operatic arias, with CD2 packing in a lineup that includes Bryn Terfel, Tony Bennett, Celine Dion and Nicola Benedetti. No wonder the audience of 70,000 went wild at what they heard and saw (Decca 0602438404773).

If you have a story to share with other organisations, please email IAA chairperson, Professor Chris Green at: cjc.green@talktalk.net
