



**Ealing Symphony
Orchestra @100**

Our Story

Voices and Memories

Thoughts and Reflections from Our Members

Members of the ESO hail from a variety of backgrounds and span several generations. Our longest-standing (sitting?) member is Hilary Potts, a viola player who joined the Orchestra in 1968.

In the lead up to the centenary current and past members were all asked to contribute a written piece talking about their association with the Orchestra. This resulted in a 320-page book of memories.

What follows here is an edited selection which illustrates the common themes of friendship, rewarding, challenging, and joy which emerged.

The musical ability of the Orchestra means the repertoire and concerts are of the highest standard. The ESO, however, is more than just an orchestra, and that is what makes it so special (**Fergus Pateman, trumpet**).

I first joined the Orchestra in 1983 and re-joined in 2016. And there at the helm was John Gibbons. What a fantastic appointment — take a bow, whoever found him. I had come across John years earlier. He was still as enthusiastic and entertaining as ever. He had lost none of his charisma (**Mike Phillips, oboe**).

ESO has always been sociable. We have organised among other things rounders, curry nights, ten-pin bowling, narrow boat excursions, a 'booze cruise', an overnight stay in Calais, an annual Christmas meal, and many summer meals, plus a good number of post-concert parties (**David Weedon, clarinet**).



ESO members and their families on tour to Lucca, July 2017.

I was surprised (blown away, even) by the range and quality of less familiar music that the great John Gibbons introduced us to. However sceptical we might have been at a first rehearsal John deployed his enthusiasm and skill to such effect that when we performed the piece we were convinced that it was an unjustly neglected masterpiece! (**Steve Warrington, bassoon**).

2021 marked my quarter century in the ESO. Twenty-five years of friendship and fun-filled music-making – here's to many more years of memories and music with my ESO family (**Emma Wakeling, cello**).

One thing that struck me immediately about the Orchestra was how strong the bonds of friendship are between the players. As a group we've been through everything that life can, and has, thrown at us: marriage and divorce, birth and death, new careers, redundancy, and retirement. I was prouder than punch to be Chair in my final year before going to live in the Netherlands (**Sally Romary, viola**).

I've made a number of close friendships for life, with both current and past members, cemented at rehearsals and various social activities, which is something the ESO excels in. I wanted to give something back and was a Committee member for over ten years, and Front of House Manager for two (**Rachel Wickham, oboe**).

I couldn't believe my luck to have such an orchestra on my doorstep. Whole concerts of items new to me, a wonderful commitment to British music. I am grateful to John Gibbons that this has extended to my father John Gardner with ESO performing several of his works (**Emily Gardner, violin**).

The ESO exposed me to orchestral music when I was young and helped me develop as a musician, setting me up for my current career as a freelance percussionist. Thanks for all the musical memories (**Matt Fletcher, percussion**).

A lovely friendly bunch — often lots of giggling, the occasional missing item of concert clothing and much passing around sweets — a great bunch of people! (**Laura Rossi, violin/composer**).

I joined the ESO in 1998, and my first memories are of how friendly everyone was and being almost dragged along to the Kings Arms after the first rehearsal. With the variety of jobs held by all these enthusiastic musicians, conversations are never dull (**Rachael Bucknall, cello**).

Being a member of the ESO had led to experiences that I never thought possible and that have perhaps gone some way towards shaping my current career as a music teacher with my own choirs and orchestras (**Emily Griggs, bass**).

The atmosphere of the Orchestra is always supportive and friendly, and I loved my time in the second violins, widening my musical repertoire significantly (**Sarah Botting, violin**).

It has been a constant joy to be in the ESO, not just because of the wonderful variety of music we explore together, but also because of the great fun we have. I have made some amazing friends and have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to play chamber music on both the violin and the clarinet (**Kate Day, violin**).

I love doing the kids' concerts. They give me a chance to complete the circle of inspiring excitement and enjoyment of classical music in the next generation (**Felicity Bardell, clarinet**).

For twenty years the ESO has been a huge part of my musical experience and education. The people are amazing — I've made some true friends for life. We've had some outstanding collaborations with 'Young Musicians of the Year', with Sheku, Nicola, Laura, and Jess — what a fantastic experience playing with this calibre of musicians at the start of their journey. I've also been part of the Committee and I love the way we have transformed it into a fully-fledged official charity and professional organisation to support our members (**Paul Grigg, violin**).

Joining in 2001 we were impressed not just by the standard of the Orchestra but also by the friendliness of the players — we treasure the friendships and camaraderie of this very special ensemble, as well as the warm, challenging and inspiring leadership of John Gibbons (**Ali and Mark Walker, cellos [Ali also plays recorders to the highest concert performance standard]**).

I joined the ESO in 1998 having heard that they were 'a very friendly bunch'. I would say the success of the ESO has to be down to the hard work of John and the Committee and all the other willing volunteers who together epitomise the term 'team effort'. Here's to many more years of happy music-making together! (**Pam Wise, orn**).

As well as the friendly nature of the Orchestra, I particularly like the opportunity to play new and rarely performed repertoire which John Gibbons is great at programming. Highlights for me in recent years were *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Isle of the Dead* (**Richard Davies, trumpet**).

Every time I play with the Orchestra I love it so much – it is the loveliest, friendliest orchestra filled with good people who love making music. I've been on a few tours and one that stands out is the 2014 trip to Latvia where the Latvian National Orchestra played on the Friday and we played as headliners on the Saturday with a huge billboard in the city announcing our concert. No pressure then... (**Paul Darling, flute/piccolo**).



ESO members pose under the billboard for the Cesis Art Festival, Latvia, 26 July 2014.

The ESO is special to me as it stands out as the friendliest orchestra I've played with. Musicians tend to be introverted characters, turning up, rehearsing and leaving, having only exchanged pleasantries. The ESO is different and is a platform and catalyst for many long-lasting friendships. Thank you ESO — happy hundredth birthday! (**James Greener, viola**).

I joined the ESO in 2014. Having played with youth and student orchestras I was unsure how the social dynamic with so much grey hair around would compare: would it be cliquey? judgemental? overly serious? I need not have worried as my own hair turns slowly grey I realise music-making with the ESO is all the best bits of 'youth orchestra' with the benefit of lifetimes of accumulated experience. I stayed (**Martin Burchette, violin**).

In my first year we played Mahler, we danced until the early hours by the banks of the Thames at Shepperton, and we visited the idyllic island of Ischia, that volcanic place where Lady Walton grew amazing plants and built a stage for visiting orchestras. Ealing does things that other orchestras don't, which kindles my inner rebel. I suspect this also draws in other people (perhaps we're an orchestra full of rebels?) (**Heather Humphreys, cello**).

I joined ESO after graduating and moving back home to Ealing. I so missed playing in an orchestra and touring, and had heard of the ESO — inevitable really if you played in Ealing Youth Orchestra as a teenager. I was struck immediately by how friendly everyone was and it brings a real joy that increases as the years pass (**Helena Gumley-Mason, violin**).

What a wonderful friendly orchestra! I was instantly made welcome by ESO players and friends (**Alan Garriock, cello**).



ESO rehearse at La Mortella, Ischia, August 2006.

I have not been a regular member of an orchestra since being a music student forty years ago (!) and I was amazed at the ESO repertoire and the standard of playing. I have thoroughly enjoyed it – the cello section certainly makes me work to keep up with everyone! I never thought an amateur orchestra would make such a glorious sound (**Richard Bolton, cello**).

I feel very fortunate to have found the ESO. Being principal flute is such a privilege given the Orchestra's appetite for challenging and often unusual/rare repertoire and the amazing camaraderie resulting in thrilling performances (**Peter Robertson, flute**).

This is the best orchestra I've played in. But the great bonus is the social life. I've never been in an orchestra with such a feeling of community. The fact that we bothered to keep up weekly Zoom meetings throughout the COVID pandemic lockdown periods reflects this (**Peter Duncan, violin**).

I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of playing with the ESO. Not just the music but also the friendship, insider jokes, the grueling practices that never seem to end... This coupled with John's ability to paint a vivid picture and explicit context to the music makes one look forward to a Thursday night. That and the pub dash as soon as the clock strikes ten (**Kieron Daniel, violin**).

I started learning my instrument in Venezuela at the beginnings of what became internationally known as 'El Sistema', a programme of free classical music education. Many years later I joined the ESO. It has been a short yet intense journey, enjoying the overpowering feeling of being part of an orchestra, cultivating my appreciation for great British and Irish composers, and, above all, having that sense of belonging to a big family — something at which the ESO simply excels (**Álvaro Rebón, viola**).



ESO take a raft trip in Latvia, 2011.

I took up viola to find out what it was like to make music within an orchestra and be conducted, rather than being the one who waves their hands around. As a resident of Ealing I had always admired the ESO from posters of their concerts, which featured bold, i.e. from a promoter's point of view, slightly crazy, programming — symphonies I would like to get to know, concertos I would go get my viola-playing mitts on — and all happening on my doorstep. I finally plucked up courage to pitch up at an ESO rehearsal, to find that not only is everyone a committed musician, determined to give of their best, but also a super friendly and inclusive community, who value the social part of being an orchestra as much as the ESO's special place in the cultural life of West London (**Rainer Hersch, viola/conductor**).

My first ESO concert included George Lloyd Symphony No. 4; Lloyd is one of many overlooked British composers who are making a comeback, and this symphony was a great discovery for me. Another of these composers is William Alwyn, and I had the wonderful opportunity to perform his *Pastoral Fantasia* for viola and strings with the ESO in Southampton, and again in a live-streamed concert from St Barnabas as we came out of lockdown. The sense of musical commitment in the ESO was evident at the first rehearsal I attended. The ESO performance of Mahler 10 in November 2019 was memorable, as the symphony is an epic work and a technical and emotional marathon, also featuring the viola section prominently. The ESO violas are awesome as individuals and as a family, and we rose to the occasion. (**David Way, viola**).

My memories of the Orchestra are extremely fond ones. Such quality musicians, and also lovely people. Many congratulations on your hundredth anniversary. You have given so much pleasure to players and audiences alike — and many conductors too! (**David Temple, conductor**).

When I joined the ESO I was really impressed by the personal and musical qualities of the members of the Orchestra and by the promising virtuosity of the young musicians who came as soloists, without forgetting the always warm acceptance of the audience. I will always remember the days of the concerts as some of the brightest ones in my London experience (**Paolo Franchini, violin**).

I joined the Ealing Symphony Orchestra in its hundredth anniversary season, September 2021, and was immediately overwhelmed by how welcoming the Orchestra members are. The Orchestra benefits from the impressive professional accomplishments of people who generously volunteer their skills and time to ensure it is run successfully. In my first rehearsal, I sensed a magical quality of the playing by such talented members. I continue to be astounded by the in-depth musical knowledge of our incredible Conductor. I believe there is no other orchestra as quirky as the ESO and I feel incredibly privileged to play with such proficient and decent musicians. (**Heidi Everingham, violin**).



Former ESO Chair and BA Cabin Service Director Barry Gaskell leads ESO members in an aqua aerobics session in Latvia, July 2011.

I got married in 1966 and joined the ESO in 1968 on the insistence of my husband, Ian. He promised to ensure that I could get to rehearsals every week. I have been a committee member and Librarian over the years (**Hilary Potts, viola**).

[Still playing in 2022, after fifty-four years, Hilary is the longest-standing ESO member.]

Sally Telling was an amazing asset for the Orchestra. She always kept a cool head and led us through many and varied concerts, faithfully attending despite long journeys. Most remarkable was the fact that the violin was not even Sally's first instrument; she was an accomplished flautist and those who were there cannot forget her performance of the Nielsen Flute Concerto, backed up by her father, Stan, as Leader, and sister Mandy leading the violas. Peter McGowan followed Sally in leading us through increasingly more challenging music and gently, good humouredly, encouraged us. When the ESO was in Ischia, Angela and I shared an apartment with Peter and were very impressed with his commitment to practising all day whilst we went sightseeing. (**Adrian Hailstone, violin**).

In 1994 I came across a reference to the Ealing Symphony Orchestra. When I finally made it to Elthorne and my first ESO rehearsal, some eighteen months later, RKP smiled and said something along the lines of "Did you get delayed?" To which I explained that I had indeed been detained as I had unexpectedly had another child who was now ten months old. I was impressed and flattered that he remembered our conversation at all! Little did I know then, just how extraordinary this particular orchestral Secretary was! (**Caroline Bush, violin**).

There was a very good wind section in 1978–1979, very much led on oboe by the ever-enthusiastic Richard Partridge. (**Adrian Brown, conductor**).

“Do you come from a musical family?” I’ve often been asked. My grandfather, I was told, “blew something in the Salvation Army”. My first outing with the ESO came over fifty years ago at Acton Town Hall. I have found my name in several programmes from those days, but only recently joined the viola section as a full member. (**Mollie Koenigsberger, viola**).

Digitising the ESO’s archives and compiling this little book have given me great pleasure and a real insight into the workings of the wonderful ESO organisation. My very grateful thanks to all who have helped me over the years 2020–2022, especially my husband Paul. Margaret Humphries is one of the people to stand out in my mind although I never met her in person. She retired in 1983 after fifty years. (**Jan Robinson, viola**).

It has been lovely to play in such a welcoming and high-quality orchestra since joining ESO in September 2021 after moving over to Ealing from Jersey. The after-concert pub trips have been a particular highlight. I’m very happy to have joined the orchestra committee in the front-of-house role and look forward to many more great concerts to come! (**Emilie Edelenbos, violin**).

I first came across the ESO in about 1981. And having got my feet under the table, I stayed for about thirty-five years. The best of luck to the ESO for the next hundred years! (**Frank Burgum, trumpet**).

In September 2007, my daughter Eimi who had just moved back home after finishing her degree, said, “Mum, we are going to play in Ealing Symphony Orchestra, it’ll do you good. Come with me.” (**Saori Howse, violin**).

I joined ESO in 1987–1988. Special moments have been too many, but particularly Ischia, the first Children’s concert at Ealing Green Church and the rehearsals at Ealing Green with the Homeless Winter Night Shelter in the next room. (**Deb Lovell, cello**).

My viola finds Mozart and Haydn a little modern but loves Bach and enjoys the astringency of Shostakovich. **(Ruth Marshall, viola).**

When we decided to move to the UK for my husband's job, I was confused about a lot of things. My English was very poor, it was my first time in Europe and the first thing was how I would be able to continue playing the violin. In Japan I had been playing and teaching violin professionally, but in England my daughter was still young, and my husband's company's rules did not allow wives to work. At that time, I found the ESO website in Ealing, a potential place to live, and sent an email from Japan. I think I will be living in London until 2024. My English is still not very good, but I am very happy to be part of the ESO. **(Michiru Tsutsui, violin).**

It is all distant memories now, but I played horn with the ESO for a few years, roughly from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. I responded to an appeal by the orchestral Committee for newer orchestral members to assist in the running of the Orchestra and managing concerts. For a while I was helping Richard Partridge with concert publicity, and I worked in the 'front of house' group. **(Adrian Rushton, horn).**

I remember my first Ealing Symphony concert in 1981. I still recall walking down the aisle of the church from the back at the start of the concert — it seemed such a long way! I had a very happy time of music-making with the ESO. **(Ron Corp, conductor).**

I was able to re-join the ESO in 1998. I helped as Concert Manager for two years and Treasurer for six. One evening in the pub after the ESO rehearsal, my cello was in a soft case with a pile of other instruments. A drinker, not from ESO, fell on it and that was the end of the instrument! **(Paul Robinson, cello).**

Memories from his home in Brazil: John's 'joker in the pack' (a piece we've never heard of), for example: Mosolov's *Iron Foundry* featuring a bathtub! All the socials: Christmas/summer parties. Tena-side rounders at John Gibbons' local park. RKP's briefings and energy. I loved it all. Thanks for everything. **(Barry Gaskell, horn).**

I was a bowmaker with W.E. Hill and Sons. After I set up my own shop in Chiswick a good friend, Deb Lovell, persuaded me to join the ESO in 1989. (**Matthew Coltman, viola**).

I joined the Orchestra for the 1986–1987 season. My husband Tim (a bowmaker originally working at Hill's) and I met in the Orchestra. Our family has hosted the ESO cello weekends in our IOW holiday home since 2002. (**Anne Baker, cello**).

Hill's bowmaker William Retford, violin, appears in my programmes from 1939 to 1963. He repaired one of my mother Eileen Letton's bows. (**Colin Mackenzie, trumpet**).

I joined the ESO when it was meeting in Elthorne School. Due to a lack of candidates for the post of Treasurer, I volunteered my services, which were accepted, and I continued at this for seven years or so. (**Peter Peacock, bass**).

In the summer of 2003, I moved to London to finish my medical degree. Along with the many other advantages of living in zone 2, it gave me the chance to play in the same Orchestra as my dad, Steve Warrington. (**Hannah Chapman, cello**).

I joined the Orchestra in 1994. The rehearsals were a perfect balance to working life and I was the violin fixer for five years. My favourite memories with my two children and the ESO are of young Dominic 'conducting' the Orchestra at a concert for children and also of Claire accompanying us on tour to Tuscany. She had a fabulous time too. (**Anne-Marie Sheldon, violin**).

The one thing I'm allowed to be proud of is the system for choosing our conductors. Involving everyone was pivotal: there were some conductors favoured by half of the orchestra but not the other half, whatever the committee had thought, and we were able to choose someone who suited everyone. My system was used for a third time to find Gordon Fairbairn's successor, and the choice of John Gibbons seems to have been quite a success! I hope it won't be needed again for a good while yet. (**Richard Partridge, oboe/cor anglais**).

Just after I had my first child, one of my NCT friends Bev (a double bass player) and I decided to look for an orchestra, and we found ESO! It's been a really important part of my life since then. (**Tessa Watson, cello**).

September 2021 marked my quarter century in the ESO. Twenty-five years of friendship and fun-filled music-making in more than half of my cello-playing life. Here's to many more years of memories and music with my ESO family. (**Emma Wakeling, cello**).

I joined ESO in 1989. I remember being ushered to the pub, the Castle in those days, by Frank O'Connor. Highlights include the trip to Norwich with the Crouch End Festival Chorus and David Temple for a performance of *The Apostles*. (**John Martin, violin**).

[John regularly stars in Hanwell & Ealing Operatic Society (HEOS) December pantomimes, thus carrying on a musical and acting tradition going way back to the Freebairn-Smith family and beyond.]

There are pieces that have a special place in my musical heart: Saint-Saëns's Organ Concerto, Rachmaninov's Second Symphony, the achingly beautiful slow movement of which makes me cry. Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* is an extraordinary experience and one I would, please, very much like to repeat. (**Catherine Fox, horn**).

Latvia 2011. After a particularly heavy night, a few of us took a taxi back at 'warp speed'. Speaking a bit of Russian (my wife is Russian), the conversation went a bit like...

Taxi Driver: G' morning — How are you doing?

Me: OK we think — still a little bit drunk.

Taxi Driver: Don't worry about it, so am I.

(**Hywel Walters, bass trombone**).

I was very fortunate to join the ESO in April 2006, about a week before players had to sign up for the tour to Ischia. So began what has been a most amazing time, from which I have never looked back. As David Way, our relatively recent pro Leader says, the ESO violas are indeed awesome individually and as a family. As ESO approaches its hundredth year, long may it continue! (**Catherine Barlen, viola**).

On the Lucca trip, leading Zumba on the beach in Italy was great fun as we twisted and shimmied ourselves deeper and deeper into the sand as random passers-by would join in for a song and carry on by. (**Theresa Cory, piccolo/flute**).

Much of the time the ESO flute section has lived up to the stereotype of flute sections as young, female, glamorous, and, sometimes, volatile. I cannot remember how I came to slip into the section without an audition in about 1998, but I fulfilled none of these criteria. (**Patrick Grattan, flute**).

ESO beckoned soon after I left medical school and was looking for an orchestral home. How fortunate I am to have found my ESO family back in 2000! (**Catherine Jarvis, violin**).

I've particularly enjoyed being invited to perform for the ESO's concerts for the Ealing Film and Music Festival. I recall the impressive set up of the Orchestra for the showing of *The Battle of the Somme*. White screen up, cables strategically placed, full orchestra ready for the baton to drop. The black and white silent footage of life in the trenches during the First World War was so compelling, with scenes of the troops waving to the camera and then the battle scenes brilliantly scored by composer and ESO member Laura Rossi. I recall getting a real kick out of the hushed atmosphere in the church and then playing the harp glissandos in sync with the cannons firing! Though we musicians were in situ, it felt like the thrill of being in the orchestra pit as the opera above starts to unfold. A memorable and audacious concert for Orchestra and audience. (**Ruby Aspinall, harp**).

I was very lucky to be offered the chance to play the Rachmaninov Concerto as the soloist with the ESO. It was after that I gained the confidence to ask out the very pretty bass clarinetist, I hadn't had the courage to speak to up until then. We had a lovely wedding a couple of years later when we were musically accompanied by friends from the Orchestra. I wish the Orchestra and its very talented members every success for the future. (**Richard James, violin/piano**).

After several years of living in Acton, I was very pleased to get a call to play percussion with the Orchestra... almost immediately after I had left the area to move to Richmond! (**Andrew Barnard, percussion**).

In 2012 I joined the ESO which was my new local orchestra. The double concerto opportunities with Peter Nall will always be precious memories for me, along with so many repertoire highlights including Richard Strauss, Mahler, Elgar, and Puccini. I will be forever grateful to the ESO for all the incredible musical experiences I have shared with them over the years. (**Olivia Shields, violin**).

In 2003 I dusted off my violin, which hadn't seen the light of day for fourteen years (shame!), came along to my first rehearsal in spring 2004, and despite the awful scraping noises, I was allowed to stay. Goodness knows why. But thank you everyone. (**Mel Crompton, violin/Voice Section founder**).

I rang RKP to see if they needed another horn and came along to the next rehearsal to sit between Pam and Foxy by way of an audition. That seemed to go OK, as I then joined and played fourth horn. I really enjoyed it — the standard of playing, the range of repertoire, the trips to the pub afterwards (though I can't stay up that late now on a work night). It was very special to have the ESO horns play me down the aisle at my wedding. (**Mary Saunders, horn**).

In our ESO centenary year 2022 it will be twenty years since I joined the Orchestra. It will also be twenty years since I started at the British Broadcasting Corporation as an assistant in the choral and orchestral sheet music library. I'm now a scheduler and media planner for international television channels at BBC Studios, and by a pleasing quirk of fate the BBC itself is also celebrating its one hundredth anniversary in 2022. This means I will have spent a little under half of my life associated with two important West London institutions, for exactly a fifth of each of their existences. Here's to many more years of music-making, having a lot of fun, and being part of something very special. (**Mark Robbins, violin**).

I remember looking at an unused trombone case in a house that stubbornly refused to increase in size as much as the growing family inside it. I wondered whether I should put it away in the loft for a bit. Horrified at the prospect of inertia meaning it would never come out again, I decided to take some action. Since then, I've done more ESO concerts than not. My deep gratitude to all who've allowed me on this journey, fluffs and all. (**David Fletcher, trombone**).

I think that my first concert with the ESO was in either April or June 2002. I have continued playing with the Orchestra ever since. Having spent most of my time sitting nestled amongst the violas, I felt immensely privileged to be asked to lead the section when Sally moved to the Netherlands. My orchestral highlight has to be playing the Elgar *In the South* viola solo in an incredibly hot Lucca, to a very appreciative Italian audience, and wonderfully supportive orchestral friends. (**Clare Barker, viola**).

It has been a constant joy to be in the ESO. Not just because of the wonderful variety of music we explore together, but also because of the great fun we have. I have made some amazing friends and have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to play chamber music on both the violin and clarinet. (**Kate Day, violin**).

I joined the ESO in October 1999. My most enduring memory from the first rehearsal was sitting in the second violins next to a very nice lady called Ruth who said she had known Edward Elgar, who died in 1934! (**Tim Crompton, violin/piano**).

In 2004, Maestro John took the ESO to the RC Cathedral in Bristol (where he is still Music Director) to perform Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*. I looked over to Mark Walker as he was opening his cello case and I heard him say, "Oh dear". The whole neck, finger board and strings of his cello were hanging out like a dead swan! I thought "Help! We need Mark in the Mahler!" I rang my godson, a medic cellist in Bristol. Twenty minutes later Tom arrived at the steps of the Cathedral holding a cello! Mark was so laid back. I'd have been shattered! (**Jane Moore, cello**).

John Gibbons rang one afternoon in 2008 asking if I would like a lift down as he needed a contra for some Shostakovich, so I did and loved it so much I stayed! (**Nick Epton, baritone/recorder/bassoon/contrabassoon**).

If the pandemic hadn't intervened, I would have written my hundredth programme notes in 2020, as I'm paused at ESO 98. Since I have no intention of standing down any time soon, I might even get as far as ESO 200. This could easily include music not yet written, or not played, or previously lost. Who knows what discoveries await? (**Dominic Nudd, double bass**).

[In January 2022 Jo Boswell publicly thanked Dominic for his wonderful programme notes' work and presented him with a small gift as a token of our appreciation.]

In 2004 I decided that I should return to an orchestra, so I spent a year re-learning the instrument and then turned up one day in 2005 at the ESO. Almost immediately I found myself as Hilary Potts's regular desk partner (usually third desk) and we have got on well together for many years. (**David Smith, viola/piano**).

I feel incredibly lucky that my search for an orchestra led me to the ESO, as the combination of friendliness with ambition provides me with just the right level of challenge and enjoyment. (**Jo Boswell, violin**).

I cannot think of another orchestra that could have cleared so much of my trumpeting bucket list in such a few short years. During this time, the repertoire has encompassed Mahler's Fifth, *Eine Alpensinfonie*, *Petrushka*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *The Poem of Ecstasy*, and *Sinfonia Sacra* amongst the many and varied works by neglected British composers served up by John Gibbons. These were all new to me and have been a pleasure to explore. My other notable highlights have included memorable tours of Tuscany, Haarlem, and Latvia and the magnificent musical contribution by ESO members who kindly played so beautifully for Jean and me at our wedding in 2018. (**Dan Burchette, trumpet**).

I (Anna) moved to London in 2006 and joined the Ealing Symphony Orchestra in 2008 as a social activity. Paul joined the Orchestra in 2009 playing the French horn. We got chatting at the Christmas Party and by early 2010 we were a couple. (**Anna Carrington, violin; Paul Jefferson, horn**).

It is entirely Gary Walker's fault that I became a member of the ESO. Our eldest children were in the same year in primary school, the same football team and we were playing the musical accompaniment to the hymns in church on Sundays in a strange ensemble that comprised bassoon, violin, flute, and piano. As I was musing that there must be more to musical life than this, Gary chatted about the ESO and suggested I come along and see for myself. That was 2007. (**Maddy Thomas, violin**).

I moved from South Wales to Ealing in 2018 to start studying BA Actor-Musicianship at the London College of Music. Actor-Musicianship is a bit like musical theatre. However, instead of having a pit band, the actors play all the music, so we sing, act, dance and play the music all at the same time. I soon found the ESO and joined the viola section. During lockdown I tried to get Grade 8 on as many instruments as I could. (**Jenna Dyckhoff, viola/flute**).

Having graduated from Aberystwyth, I heard about this wonderful place called London (shops open after 5pm! cuisines other than fish'n'chips! streets paved with gold!). From my tiny studio flat, I searched 'orchestras in Ealing' on the internet, which unsurprisingly put me in touch with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra. The ESO brought with it not just regular socialising (I think we've been through three landlords at the Kings Arms so far), but multiple opportunities for playing and travelling, not just in London but elsewhere in the UK and abroad. (**Jenny Davies, viola**).

My guilty pleasure is that one of my favourite concerts was in July 2016, playing John Williams's *Star Wars* Suite. You could palpably feel the excitement from both the Orchestra and audience. My husband still talks about that concert. (**Felicity Coad, trumpet**).

Neither of us can forget the April 2019 concert, and Khachaturian's Cello Concerto (soloist Willard Carter). As members of the Armenian diaspora and as enthusiasts of the music of our cultural heritage, it was a special experience to be able to take part in this performance. (**Anni and Lilit Movsisyan, violins**).

My musical journey started at the age of eight, and as with all great violists, I first learnt violin. After moving to London, I was eventually persuaded to find somewhere to play and seeing an upcoming *Alpine Symphony* concert persuaded me that the ESO was a good fit. I felt at home and the rest, as they say, is history. (**Mike Frost, viola**).

In 2018 (after about a forty-year gap) I unlocked the case to find the violin had basically disintegrated, and the bow hair mites had long died of starvation. I soon joined the ESO in the second violins. I have no idea what possessed me to neglect such a pleasurable activity for so long. (**Simon Morris, violin**).

I joined the ESO in late 2006. My debut concert was Mahler's Fifth Symphony, with its lonely solo entry after the beautiful slow movement — one of those moments when you know it is just down to you. I was amazed that I was picked, but I did feel I fitted in, and was made to feel very welcome by the rest of the section. Nick Epton on contra came along a bit later, and with the ever-encouraging Steve Warrington, we formed what has become known as the 'squadron': a mutual support group for each 'mission' flown. The flying analogy fits well: we sit almost in the middle of the Orchestra, and when we are at 'full throttle' it feels as if we are about to take off. I often get emotional during concerts when we achieve the sound we've been practising for, and am always pleased to catch Peter Nall afterwards, with his ear-to-ear grin, as he raves about the standard we have attained. (**Gary Walker, bassoon**).

A joy has been playing with the best young soloists — Sheku of course. But for me the prize goes to Jess Gillam. Equally memorable have been the social events such as the Christmas parties. I recall a pub crawl for David Smith's birthday, with not just great pubs but excellently planned out-routes also. (**Andrew Roberts, violin**).

Mahler 2 in Bristol, Tchaik 6 in Smith Square, Elgar in Ealing, beers in Nijmegen, camping in Cambridgeshire. ESO 2002–2006 thank you, we had a blast! (**Nick & Alex Jackman, cello**).

In October 2018 I decided to take up a new instrument. Perhaps something slightly more portable than a pipe organ... I have always loved the viola — I love an underdog! — and so got in contact with a local teacher and bought myself an instrument. I joined the ESO in 2020! (**Matthew Newton, viola**).

I, Anna, joined in the summer of 2014, when a tour to Latvia was short of violins. Mervyn and I were married the following year, and I permitted him to join me in the ESO. The Orchestra was everything I had hoped it would be. I found everyone to be kind, friendly and a bit silly — in a good way. In 2016, our son Max was born, and eight months later he went on his first ESO tour. We split the concert so that Mervyn played in Rachmaninov's Second Symphony, and I played in the Bach Double Concerto. Eimi and Rhodri (double bass) had brought Hana, just three days older than Max. It was comforting to have Eimi and Hana beside me as I pushed Max screaming around whatever hot but picturesque town square that was, whilst everybody else got to sit still and play Rachmaninov. A tour with a baby actually worked surprisingly well, and it was nice getting to know the other orchestral plus ones whilst sitting out of rehearsals. It felt like the perfect balance of fun people and serious music. (**Anna and Mervyn Chong, violins**).

Ischia was quite the experience and definitely an orchestra I wanted to play with again! Luckily, their trombone deficit turned out to be permanent and I filled the spot. Six months and one rather snow-free Orchestra skiing trip later Heather and I were dating, and eight years on she accepted my marriage proposal halfway down a thankfully snow-filled piste. Now we are a family with two lovely daughters. Over the years I've served on the Committee, and as Orchestral Manager; and organised a couple of tours. We've also enjoyed organising numerous social and fund-raising events for the Orchestra, from 'come and sing' events to quiz evenings. (**Martyn Humphreys, trombone**).

I had heard of the Ealing Symphony Orchestra long before I even thought of ever joining its esteemed ranks. I knew John Gibbons in the days of Opera Lirica. The day came to 'bite the bullet' and do a concert with the ESO, performing the concert version of *Porgy and Bess* as one of the principal singers, but once at the rehearsal, the memories of being in an orchestral setting again grew like a Phoenix from the flames, and I was already hooked on the idea of going back into the melée of a band. My chance eventually came about two years later when I was invited by John to do Scriabin's Third Symphony. Meeting 'The Crew' (Martyn, Felix, Hywel, David and Alan) was a very major learning curve for me to integrate into the scheme of things. I have enjoyed the notion of being the 'Nan-ki-Poo' player (check *The Mikado*) and the best concert for me was being in the trombone section when Sheku Kanneh-Mason came and performed the Elgar Cello Concerto (his first public gig of the piece). I look forward to so many more concerts with the ESO (work permitting) and hope I can live up to the expectations of the Orchestra. **(Keel Watson, bass-baritone/trombone).**

When going on tour the one I am most well-known for was the one I never made it to. I was so nervous about getting to the airport on time I was late and missed my flight. My violin went, so to this day I can say that I have never been to Latvia, but my violin has! **(Lou Page, violin).**

I played the violin in ESO regularly from 1997 to 2005, then occasional concerts in Thame until 2010. It was a very friendly orchestra, with annual jaunts and rounders in addition to more formal concerts covering a wide and interesting repertoire. **(Julia Harris, violin).**

I joined in February 2016 and remember being daunted by how great everyone's sightreading was of brand-new music! It's been a wonderful constant being in the ESO over the last five years and I feel lucky to have played such a variety of music that I was previously unfamiliar with. I now know how to play the whip in *Sleigh Ride* at Christmas. **(Sarah Lough, violin).**

In the University of London Orchestra, I shared a desk with a certain Paul Robinson. My first room-share in Hall at University was with engineer Peter Peacock. Finding the Orchestra in 2015 and my reconnection with Paul Robinson after over forty years is a special memory. It wasn't long before I was told, oh, you must come to the Isle of Wight. OK, so I went. What a crazy, fun, fabulous time we had, playing silly games, cracking jokes, drinking and eating too much and just getting along. I hope this will continue for many years to come. I joined ESO in 2019. I was really impressed by the personal and musical qualities of the members of the Orchestra and by the promising virtuosity of the young musicians who joined as soloists, without forgetting the always warm acceptance of the audience. I will always remember the days of the concerts as some of the brightest ones in my London experience. **(Martin Jones, cello/double bass/piano/composer/arranger).**

Such was my delight to discover, upon my return to Ealing after University in 2016, that the ESO heralded its own high standard of playing, along with the same sense of community and ebullience that I had been missing since leaving the Ealing Youth Orchestra (except that the ESO's members were all of legal drinking age). One of my very first ESO memories from 2016 is filming *In Darkness* at Angel Studios in Islington (tragically now closed), in a scene with actress Natalie Dormer. **(Alice Laddiman, cello).**

I feel very fortunate to have found the ESO. I joined in the 2015–2016 season and have played every concert since. Being principal flute is such a privilege given the Orchestra's appetite for challenging and often unusual/rare repertoire, and the amazing camaraderie resulting in thrilling performances. **(Peter Robertson, flute).**

Teaching for Ealing Music Service and being the Ensemble Development Lead enables me to see first-hand the effect ensemble playing has on the young people in Ealing. I deputised regularly for the ESO for a number of years, before becoming a regular player around eighteen months ago. It is exciting to be an ESO member for our centenary year! **(Caroline Swan, flute).**

I studied at Southampton University where I joined a few orchestras, and I met my future husband Rhodri. After I graduated in 2007, I returned home to Acton, and found myself lost without my weekly fix of orchestra practice. I looked up what was on offer locally. The ESO was of course the top hit. I contacted RKP, who invited me to join the first rehearsal of that term. (**Eimi Lawrence, violin**).

I returned to London in 2019 and did a web search for orchestras. Thursdays mostly worked and the people at the ESO were very friendly and went to the pub. As ever the viola section was lovely. Aren't we always the stars of the show? Favourite concert has to be the Rachmaninov — *Isle of the Dead* and *Francesca da Rimini*. Sent shivers down my spine! (**Steven Lewis, viola**).

The joy for me of playing with so many wonderful musicians who have such enthusiasm and such an appetite to play to the very highest standards they can achieve, is something tremendously special! ESO, like any orchestra, is an eclectic, diverse musical family, and for me to be able to help (the strings at least) work as a unified team and experience the thrill that can bring gives me deep personal satisfaction. The development in sound and ensemble in the strings since, say, the Worms trip in 2013 through to the beginning of lockdown last year, has been remarkable and a testament to the will and concentration of all the members. Personal highlights include, of course, *Ein Heldenleben* (which shouldn't even be possible!), Janacek's *Taras Bulba*, the tremendous rich string sound in Sibelius Symphony No. 1, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* accompaniment which had such quality and sense of style, and particularly the whole July 2018 concert with the *Háry János* Suite and the amazing Scriabin *Poem of Ecstasy*! I could go on and on... but simply... what a privilege! Thank you all for your musicianship and above all, friendship. (**Peter Nall, violin**).

On Saturday 5 May 1994 I conducted my first concert with the ESO. Little did I then realise how auspicious a date it would be in my life! The concert took place in St. Peter's Church, Mount Park Road, with Mark Tucker as the flute soloist in Khachaturian's Flute Concerto. Sally Telling was leading.

Amongst the Orchestra names are eight still playing — John Martin, Adrian and Angela Hailstone, Anne-Marie Lethbridge, Hilary Potts, Deborah Lovell, the 'Rt. Hon' RKP, and David Weedon. In looking back over nearly 200 ESO programmes you will hopefully forgive me for not commenting on each concert! Suffice it to pick out a few that stand out for a variety of reasons:

On 6 May 1995 ESO celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of VE day with what became a typical JG programme: Beethoven's Symphony No 5, *The Dambusters March*, Martinu's Cello Concerto No. 1 and, 'the joker in the pack', Bernard Stevens's *A Symphony of Liberation*. At that point, as the programme noted, six members of the Orchestra were absent on maternity leave including three from the string front desks!

Other notable moments in the early years include the performance of Mossolov's *Iron Foundry* with the percussion section enlarged by a metal bath, courtesy of Ruth Marshall (December 1995). In December 1998 we celebrated a volcanic eruption with Alun Hovhaness's Symphony No. 50 *Mount St. Helens* in a concert that also included the world premiere of Roxanna Panufnik's *Christmas Kompot* — an ESO commission — which also involved Ealing Youth Choir and Notting Hill and Ealing High School Junior School Choir.

In the late 1990s the Orchestra began to morph into one where friendship and camaraderie become a core element of its DNA. During the summer months we met on Thursday evenings for rounders in the park at Perivale and there were many late-night parties at 149 Woodhouse Avenue, often following concerts, where the barrel of beer, brilliantly organised by Mr John Martin, was placed beyond the garden pond so that a refill was a dangerous expedition of daring and skill.

Perhaps the most special occasion was our concert to open the Teatro Greco, Giardino La Mortella, Ischia in 2006 at the invitation

of Lady Susana Walton. Susana had 'adopted' me after seeing me conduct *Belshazzar's Feast* in Milton Keynes and Ischia became my summer Paradise. What could be more wonderful than performing Walton's Violin Concerto with and for friends, set against a stunning Mediterranean backdrop.

(John Gibbons, musical director).