

**Wherever you may travel throughout the world you will almost certainly encounter police bands of all types with strong military or colonial routes. What you will probably not find is a police symphony orchestra, particularly one of the quality and size of the British Police Symphony Orchestra.**

As one of the Nations most highly acclaimed amateur orchestras, the BPSO has gone from strength to strength since its formation in 1989. In addition to delighting audiences with performances of classical and light music, the orchestra generously supports a variety of charities around the United Kingdom.

### **From humble beginnings**

Members of the orchestra first met in Birmingham in October 1989 when viola player Constable Alex Roe of the West Midlands Police extended an invitation to police officers and civilian support staff musicians to attend a rehearsal in the city. The invitation was to all members of the U.K's 45 constabularies and resulted in an initial attendance of around 90 aspiring orchestral musicians. From those humble, and at times unharmonious beginnings, the orchestra quickly gained in competence due to the hard work and dedication of its members and the professional guidance of its first Musical director, Robin Page. Potential members were subsequently auditioned as they applied to join the orchestra with only the most accomplished being selected. After little more than a year of hard work, and having secured the patronage of the late Sir Yehudi Menuhin KBE.,O.M., the orchestra set off on its first tour, performing at major venues as far afield as Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Exeter and Birmingham. The success of that tour set the stage for subsequent tours and concerts in many other parts of the UK and northern Europe allowing the BPSO to build on its reputation for quality and value. It has also been privileged to perform at major venues such as Birmingham's Symphony Hall, The Royal Albert Hall, Barbican and Fairfield Halls in London, Manchester's Free Trade Hall and the Colston Hall in Bristol, to name but a few. It has also performed in some of the nations most prominent cathedrals including those at Coventry, Lichfield and Bristol and at Beverley and York Minsters.

### **Evening All**

An evening with the BPSO has something for everyone from the fun of the 'Last Night of the Proms' annual concert at Symphony Hall, open air concerts on sultry summer evenings to more serious classical concerts with performances of symphonies and concerto's. Audiences can be assured of a polished performance, whatever their taste.

The orchestra is accomplished at performing a vast range of music including film

scores, music from the shows, choral works and modern music, as well orchestral, symphonic classics.

Performances by the orchestra combine high quality musicianship with a varied programme with excellent value for money, guaranteeing an enjoyable and memorable night out.

### **A sound commitment**

The BPSO comprises more than 75 dedicated musicians representing the majority of the UK's 45 constabularies. As a mark of their commitment and enthusiasm, they travel from all over the nation at their own expense and in their own time to attend monthly weekend rehearsals. The orchestra prides itself on the quality of its musicianship and each member is an accomplished musician in his or her own right, often playing with other orchestras or groups elsewhere. Whatever their ability, and the orchestra has the benefit of utilising many musicians of a professional standard. Players do not receive any financial reward from their participation in the BPSO although the orchestra does employ a professional conductor and soloists and occasionally tutors on this basis.

Many of the original musicians who attended that first rehearsal in Birmingham remain in the orchestra but due to professional commitments often involving shift work, and family priorities, we unfortunately have had to say a reluctant farewell to some members. Consequently the orchestra is continually opening its doors to new musical talent from within the service and is always keen to welcome and encourage members from the families of serving police employees.

Rehearsal weekends, which are possible due to the generosity and hospitality of a number of police training departments around the country, are not all hard work. Members have plenty of time in the evenings to relax and socialise together and with the many helpers who work behind the scenes to make the orchestra such a success.

### **Charity and community**

Although the BPSO is self financing and a charity in its own right (registered charity number 1003562) the first ten years saw it raise tens of thousands of pounds for good causes in addition to boosting awareness of the many organisations that it has worked with. Charities that have received donations from the BPSO include Save The Children, Police Dependents Trust, Royal Ulster Constabulary Widows and Orphans Fund, Macmillan Cancer Relief, Douglas Macmillan Hospice and the Derbyshire Association For The Blind.