



Sedbergh

1525 **500** 2025



Performing Arts Report

500 Years – Gala Weekend

2024-2025



Music at the Gala Weekend

As we all know, Music has played a prominent role at Sedbergh since it was founded as a chantry school. These days, music at the school has obviously greatly diversified, and it continues to play a big part in this anniversary year. Having enjoyed a concert at the Bridgewater Hall in February that celebrated choral and orchestral playing, the gala weekend allowed us to involve some of our pop and jazz offering.

Friday 2nd May: Jazz & Swing

Having originally started life in Queen's Hall, before moving to Powell Hall in 2011, one of the highlights of the Sedbergh calendar this year joined with the biggest meal ever held in Sedbergh as 400 people gathered in the Hirst Centre. With two stages set up amongst the dozens of tables in a glittering hall, we were treated to twenty items across the course of the evening. At either end of the night, our Big Band featured – playing a selection of jazz and funk tunes as well as being joined by Tilly G (C, Y12) for a stunning performance of 'Skyfall'. Meanwhile, two bands from our Pop Collective added some swung notes to their items to make themselves musically eligible to take part! A special mention to our soloists – Ted, Julia, Holly, Oliver, Rose, Tamsin, Nathan, Liv & Bruno – who stepped up as soloists. It was a great night, much enjoyed by all.





Saturday 3rd May: Lunchtime Gig

As soon as the Sports Day competition was complete, people flocked to the area outside the First Centre for a spot of lunch from the food village that had been set up, and to enjoy performances from our Pop Collective. The four bands that played, featured pupil from across the school performing a wide variety of popular styles of music – from Guns n’ Roses to Oasis to Little Richard to Cream, and much more. We even enjoyed some pupil compositions. It was an absolutely brilliant hour of music that set up a brilliant atmosphere for the crowd and gave the performers a real buzz.

Saturday 3rd May: Chapel Service

A congregation of the Sedbergh School community past and present gathered in Chapel on the Saturday afternoon to pause and reflect on the history of the school, and a few of the people and stories that particularly helped shape it into what it is today. Readings were interspersed with Mr Seymour’s selection of choral music that was matched in atmosphere and/or era to the readings. For these items, it was an absolute delight for a choir consisting of pupils and staff past and present, to form especially for the occasion. The standard of singing was absolutely first rate – powerful, warm, moving and incredibly well-controlled. There won’t have been many people who weren’t moved at some point by what was a special service.





Saturday 3rd May: OS Dinner

A large gathering of Old Sedberghians made the journey to their alma mater for the weekend, and we greatly enjoyed catching up with so many people over the weekend, particularly of course the musicians! As the Hirst Centre was once again filled up for an evening of merriment, we welcomed back Oliver and Tilly to perform their solos, alongside James McLeod and Ella Seymour – former pupils of the school who have gone on to enjoy success in music. It was wonderful to hear them all.

Sunday 4th May: Commemoration of Benefactors service at the Cloisters

With Sedbergh benefiting from an extended spell of dry and sunny weather, a special service took place on the upper deck of the cloisters, with the school joined by hundred of OS and parents for a service that overlooked the beautiful rolling slopes of Holme Fell. We are very grateful to OS and former school organist, Dr Damian Howard, who very kindly commissioned choral composer Philip Stopford to write a new piece for our Chapel Choir. This was a remarkable privilege for us – we have greatly enjoyed singing a number of Philip's pieces already – and his 'Prayer for King Henry VI' was absolutely beautiful. It enjoyed its premiere during the service. Meanwhile, a brass ensemble provided the accompaniment for some predictably hearty hymn singing from the congregation as our musical contributions to the weekend came to a close.





Saturday 3rd May: OS Dinner

A large gathering of Old Sedberghians made the journey to their alma mater for the weekend, and we greatly enjoyed catching up with so many people over the weekend, particularly of course the musicians! As the Hirst Centre was once again filled up for an evening of merriment, we welcomed back Oliver and Tilly to perform their solos, alongside James McLeod and Ella Seymour – former pupils of the school who have gone on to enjoy success in music. It was wonderful to hear them all.

Sunday 4th May: Commemoration of Benefactors service at the Cloisters

With Sedbergh benefiting from an extended spell of dry and sunny weather, a special service took place on the upper deck of the cloisters, with the school joined by hundred of OS and parents for a service that overlooked the beautiful rolling slopes of Holme Fell. We are very grateful to OS and former school organist, Dr Damian Howard, who very kindly commissioned choral composer Philip Stopford to write a new piece for our Chapel Choir. This was a remarkable privilege for us – we have greatly enjoyed singing a number of Philip's pieces already – and his 'Prayer for King Henry VI' was absolutely beautiful. It enjoyed its premiere during the service. Meanwhile, a brass ensemble provided the accompaniment for some predictably hearty hymn singing from the congregation as our musical contributions to the weekend came to a close.





Stages Through the Ages

To celebrate 500 years of Sedbergh School, the drama department staged a series of scenes from the last 500 years of theatre. Moving around the school site, audiences were ushered by pupils in full historical dress, who then introduced the six mini-scenes. The interval saw Tilly take musical theatre requests from the audience in Powell Hall from I Got Rhythm, to Popular. The cast of 24 have worked extremely hard over the past months, it was a joy to see them reaping the rewards of that work at the weekend and thoroughly enjoying themselves. I am so proud of each and every one of them.

1500's

Starting in 1525 outside Powell Hall on a "travelling" cart, The Path Of True Love was a scene performed in the style of Commedia Delle'arte, an Italian comedy style which evolved over time into what we now recognise as pantomime, or clowning. The pupils, (Oscar, Olly, Frank, Ruby, Evie, and Zara), were asked to work completely outside of their comfort zone, including with masks and slapstick routines. It was truly delightful when, on the first performance the audience laughed, and it "clicked" for the pupils. By the end of the weekend the cast were savouring the comedy, ad-libbing, and truly throwing themselves into the physicality of the piece.

1600's

We then travelled to the early 1600's for Much Ado About Nothing. The cloisters proved the perfect setting for Benedick (Oscar) to hide in the garden and overhear a conversation about how Beatrice (Lizzy) is in love with him. Of course the conversation (between Barney and Miguel) is a set-up and hilarity ensues in true Shakespearean style. The pupils coped incredibly well with the dialogue and delivered it with such clarity of meaning. They even included a beautiful rendition, by Lizzy, of Sigh No More, Ladies (Hey Nonny Nonny), ably accompanied by Fred on guitar.





1700's

The audience then made their way to Powell Hall stage for *The School For Scandal* by Richard Sheridan. The costumes and wigs were tremendous and worth turning up for alone. Adam L. played the wealthy, middle-aged Sir Peter with such verbal dexterity that his challenging dialogue seemed easy. Adam C. squeezed every inch of comedy out of the role of the dry-witted Rowley, Sir Peter's valet. The part of Sir Peter's young country wife was played by Harriet who mastered the art of communicating subtext via the use of a fan (fan-ography?). The scene was topped and tailed by the incredible musical talents of Julia playing the harpsichord.

1800's

The next scene also took place in Powell Hall and took the audience back to the raucous world of Victorian Music Hall. Adam L. made the perfect impresario, welcoming the audience and introducing the acts in exuberant style. Holly and Olly took on the personas of Marie Lloyd and Dan Leno as they led the audience through a series of traditional music hall songs such as *My Old Man Said Follow The Van*, accompanied by Julia at the piano. The dances were ably performed by Lula, Emily, Ryleigh, Mariella, and Zara, all in full Victorian garb. The audience responded brilliantly to Emily and Mariella as they performed a comedy sketch as the Marvellous Marvelo, and his assistant, Beryl. The bad jokes and worse magic tricks came so thick and fast that when a piece of scenery actually fell over the audience weren't sure at first if it was part of the act (it wasn't)!

1930's

We then took over the Brampton Room and created a BBC radio studio, circa 1930. In order to showcase the advent of Radio Drama, staff collaborated to write a script: *The Last Will of Thomas Blyth*. The scene is about a group of actors (Adam C, Grace, and Evie) who are due to broadcast a radio play set in a haunted house, however one of the lead actresses is missing... The studio manager, played by Frank, struggles to maintain order and keep the sound effects team (George and Angus) in check.





1980's

Our final location was the Headmaster's study where we were treated to a scene from Willy Russell's *Educating Rita*. Holly was thoroughly convincing as hairdresser Rita – her scouse accent was flawless (handy having a Liverpoolian as Head of Art). Barney played a convincing middle-aged whisky-drinking Frank, and looked so at home at Mr Harrison's desk!

I must extend my grateful thanks to the core staff team of Steve Wilkinson, Cate Hall, Chris Alinson, and Lauren Hall, all of whom have dedicated their time and expertise over the last few months to make this such a success. Thanks so much to the wider staff team who have supported through accommodating rehearsals, giving up classroom spaces, and helping with front of house. A final thanks must go to parents of cast members who have helped with line-learning, sourcing items of costume, and for clapping, laughing, and singing along to the performances so enthusiastically.

Suzie Pye
Head of Drama

