

HIGHNOTES

Somme100

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A place in history

Many members presented concerts as part of Somme100 last year. With the release of another score in 2017, we chat to the project's composer **Laura Rossi**

What is the Somme100 project? How did you get involved? The Imperial War Museum commissioned me to score the 1916 film *The Battle of the Somme* for the 90th anniversary in 2006. This was performed live by the Philharmonia Orchestra, with the film, and presented with a certificate of UNESCO world heritage (the first British document of any kind to be included.)

Having spent months researching the film and the battle (during which I found my own family connection) I realised what an important film it is, not only as a historical document but also as a ground-breaking piece of cinema. *The Battle of the Somme* film broke all box office records and in 1916 was watched by nearly half the UK population in its first six weeks of release (a record not beaten until *Star Wars* in 1977).

For the 95th anniversary we put on a short tour of six performances which was very successful. For the centenary last year we wanted to do something much bigger to enable this film to reach as many people as possible through live orchestral screenings.

There will be 100 performances for Somme100. How is it hearing your work played by so many different orchestras? The great thing is they are always unique and special in their own way. The music and expression are all written in the score but individual players can always bring their own personality to it. Some of my favourite performances have been the amateur and youth orchestras who have connected with this film. Many of the orchestras had a film night to watch the film with my recorded music so that they understand what they are accompanying — and you can tell the ones that have done this — you can hear it in their playing.

What can you tell us about the next film score?

The Battle of the Ancre is the sequel to the Somme film — shot in November 1916 and released in 1917. It is a cinematically stunning film. The IWM is releasing the DVD with my newly recorded score this year. It is scored for either a chamber ensemble of 15 musicians or for full string section, single woodwind, piano and percussion. It is a bit less challenging to play compared to the Somme film score and enables smaller orchestras to put this on. The chamber version enables it to be performed in smaller venues.

What has been your highlight so far? Perhaps most moving were many of the amateur and youth orchestras, who through weeks of rehearsals have really found their own connections with this film, and the battle. It's these screenings that have made it feel like the most worthwhile project I have ever been involved in. These orchestras have helped this film reach a new audience and brought communities together, developing new relationships between local film, music and history societies and schools and colleges — many of which have already planned future collaborations. I hope that the film continues to be screened with live orchestras for generations to come.

To put on a live orchestral screening of the Battle of the Somme or Battle of the Ancre films email: somme100film@gmail.com. **To hire the parts and score email:** silentfilms@fabermusic.com

Read about Falkirk Tryst Orchestra's experience of performing The Battle of the Somme on page 21.

Above:
Laura Rossi at
the Imperial War
Museum. Photo:
Tas Kyprianou

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YAP ARTISTS 2017

The Tillet Trust is pleased to announce that the following artists were chosen for their YAP scheme in 2017

Young Artists
Platform



Toby Hughes double bass



George Todica piano



A4 Brass Quartet



Magnard Ensemble wind quintet

SHOWCASES

The Tillet Trust will showcase these YAP artists at Wigmore Hall during the 2017/2018 season. Details of dates available on the Tillet Trust website

www.thetillettrust.org.uk

Tillet Trust

SPONSORSHIP towards artists fees is offered to concert promoters for UK bookings during 2017 and 2018.

More details of how to book these artists and how to access sponsorship support

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MEMBERS

BLOW YOUR TRUMPET



Children's orchestra workshop

Bournemouth Chamber Music (BCMS) teamed up with Pavão String Quartet to promote a very special day for the children of the local Coda Fiddle Orchestra, writes **Terry Rickets**



Coda Fiddle Orchestra's mantra is 'No child should be deprived of learning a musical instrument on grounds of cost.'

Crucially, forty enthusiastic children provided a ready-made workshop infrastructure, and had rehearsed their music over several months.

Choosing appropriate tutors is vital. Pavão Quartet tick the boxes: superb musicianship; proven record of inspirational teaching of children; friendly personalities; collectively the mothers of six young children.

Since many CFO children and their families had never heard a string

quartet, Pavão included rehearsing and performing two pieces of music, demonstrating the beautiful sound of a top-class quartet. Senior CFO players heard part of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* quartet, with Pavão discussing solving problems which the music posed.

Then followed coaching, rehearsal and performance of Bach's double violin concerto: several CFO players were soloists in the movements.

Pavão's Jenny Sacha immediately relaxed and inspired these apprehensive soloists, their confidence growing as they responded to advice. Likewise the orchestra's sound rose to a new standard.

Then the entire CFO heard Pavão play a carefully-chosen piece – Haydn's 'Emperor' quartet's slow movement variations. Pavão repeated it, asking who

was playing the main tune at a given time – which kept the attention of even the youngest pupils!

The afternoon coaching session was for the younger players, divided into three age groups, all rehearsing Pachelbel's Canon. Parents accompanied the youngest children to a special session by Jenny Sacha. Afterwards, one little girl said 'Please Mummy, can she be my violin teacher?'

All the groups combined for a final rehearsal and performance, led by Pavão.

CFO's director Jack Maguire said 'The whole day was absolutely magnificent – the youngsters benefited enormously.'

Supported by Wessex Young Musicians Trust and Poole Audi.

bournemouthchambermusic.co.uk

Battling on

Highnotes cover stars Falkirk Tryst Orchestra gave a Somme100 concert last year. **Anna McGregor** writes about the experience

Click track. Those words were soon to become both our friend and enemy. I think our conductor must have said them scores of times when rehearsing and, I'm sure, had spent three times as long listening to that cursed track on his own. But for amateur musicians, this was our lifeline, linking our parts and performance to the emotive narrative that unfolded in the film behind us.

After the first run-through of *The Battle of Somme*, we were thoroughly convinced that we had bitten off more than we could chew. But as our rehearsal season progressed, and the haunting themes in the music took form, we began to realise that we were part of something unique, special and wholly amazing.

Our involvement with the work began simply enough, from an email advert

publicising the event. After chasing up a few details, we discovered that our local community trust had independently decided to show the film. They even searched for local personal connections, as it turns out the partner of an orchestra member performs on a pair of bagpipes that was almost certainly used at the Battle itself.

This performance was unlike any that most members of the orchestra had ever been involved in. Most players found the music challenging, but all ended up becoming confident in their ability to play it. Much of this success was due to the dedication of our conductor. He devoted endless hours to learning the score and using the click track. Early on, he recognised the significance of this opportunity, which we are all glad was



FTO member Neil Clark greets guests with a performance on bagpipes saved from the battle itself.

carried through.

This work combined stirring music with a powerful film that recognised both the determination and hardship that were part of this historical event, creating a very fitting commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.

falkirktrystorchestra.org.uk