



DURHAM JOHNSTON SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

July 2022

Dear Musician and Parents/Guardians,

Thank you for all your support over what has been a very successful year of music making at Durham Johnston School. Following two years of limited enrichment provision, it has been good to see all the performing groups re-established, and our usual programme of concerts and events running.

Weekly rehearsals began in September with Junior, Senior and Chamber Choirs, Junior and Senior Orchestras, Wind Band and Big Band welcoming members new and old and looking ahead to the repertoire for the year. Lunchtime support sessions for Aural Skills, Keyboard Skills, and GCSE performance also were also soon up and running.

Chamber Choir were delighted to go to Durham Cathedral to sing the service of Evensong on Monday 22nd November. Very few members of Chamber Choir had ever sung Evensong before, so it was particularly pleasing that the Cathedral Sub-Organist commented that he had never heard the psalms sung so well by a visiting choir!

Preparations for the Christmas Concerts and Carol Service began, with staff soon complaining of 'Jingle Bells' ringing through the atrium in October! Very sadly it was decided that the Carol Service in Durham Cathedral would not go ahead, and a pre-recorded version was hastily assembled and viewed collectively by all members of the school community in school during form time. The concerts did go ahead, with four performances over two nights to allow audience members and performers to be well-spaced, and they were filled with festive favourites.

The new year saw many of the more senior pupils juggling mock exams, revision, practice and rehearsals, but we are always grateful that our musicians show such a high level of commitment and see their music-making as an important contribution to school community life. We again decided to run four concerts over two evenings, this term with the theme 'Music about Music'. This allowed our imagination to run wild, and we saw performances ranging from the early baroque delights of Henry Purcell's *Music for a While*, through classics such as *The Sound of Music* and *Seventy-Six Trombones*, to the driving rhythms of *Rock around the Clock* and *You Can't Stop the Beat!* The spring concert is also the last time our Y13 musicians play together, and it was time to say thank you and wish them luck for the future. It was superb to see that the tradition of the 'Y13 Song' has not died out and was indeed resurrected in style with Billy Joel's *Piano Man* transformed with customised lyrics ("We're singing this song for the Holmes'...").

The Summer term is somewhat quieter without rehearsals for the main ensembles, but this term saw many pupils taking ABRSM exams and we know that there have been lots of excellent results, testament to the many hours of practice that go on each week. To provide soloists with a chance to perform in public, and to receive feedback, we saw the return after a two-year gap of our annual 'Music Festival'. This takes the form of a competition with mixed-instrument classes for three levels of ability. Our winners this year were Eleonora Vallascas (Class 1), Eilidh Huddart (Class 2) and Beau Beveridge (Class 3). They were each presented with a trophy by our adjudicator Mr Simon Lee.

Our final event of the year was *Music for a Summer Evening* – a cabaret-style evening for sixth-form musicians, parents and friends. This is a chance to celebrate the support and commitment of our musicians over their time at Durham Johnston, and recognise what an important part of their time at school music has been, and how they have helped to pass on a love of music, and the enjoyment of it to the younger years. We thank them, and we thank you for your continued support of the Music Department and we hope to produce many enjoyable evenings of music for your pleasure over the coming year.

Yours faithfully,

Mr E Holmes