

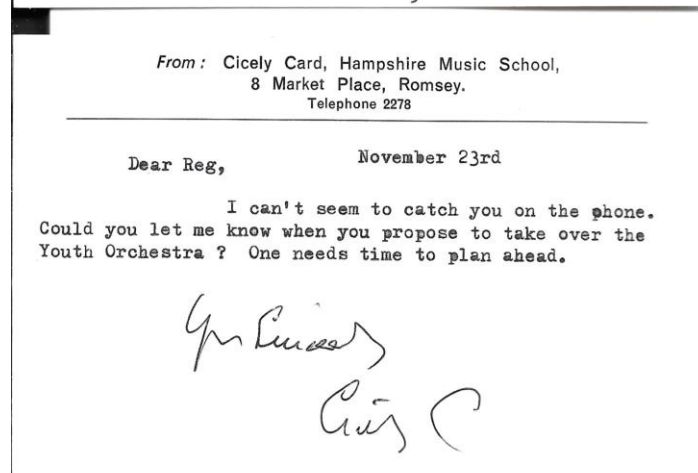
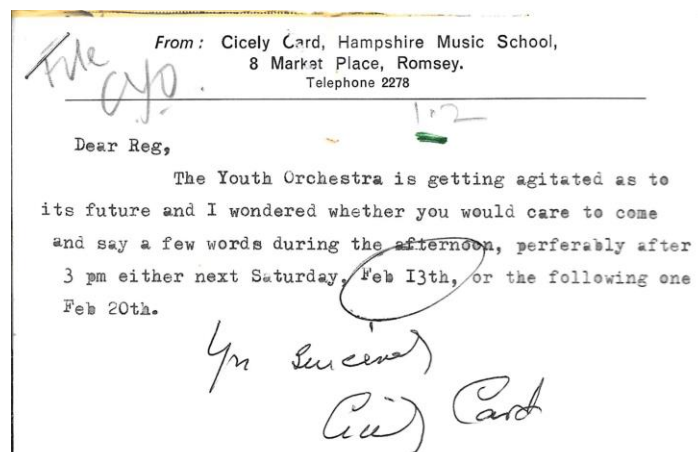
Gary (Edgar) Holmes

1936-2024



It is with great sadness that we bid farewell to Gary Holmes, a larger than life character and true colossus in HCYO's history and to whom we all owe so much. Many current members will not have heard of him but will, unknowingly, be following his footsteps, for it was Gary who set up so many of the activities and traditions we still have the privilege to be able to experience, from Summer tours to the unmissable Bryanston orchestra course, and even orchestra dresses and the traditional ending of the year with South Rampart Street Parade!

To understand Gary's role in HCYO it is worth diving into some history. We often think of Gary as the founder of the orchestra and if you ever mentioned this, he would be the first one to deny it! HCYO was in fact first formed in 1957 under the auspices of the Hampshire Rural Music School and its then Director, Cicely Card. The Rural Music School was formed in 1935 and continued working along with the newly established Local Education Authority in 1949. When Cicely Card planned to retire in 1970, talks with Hampshire County Council began, with the purpose of taking over HCYO and developing it further. It seems from various snippets of information here and there, that there might have been some indecision, for the process took a little time...



Finally, in May 1971, arrangements were made for interviews for the newly established HCYO leadership role, with the prospect of starting in September of the same year. Interviews took place on the 22nd of May 1971 with the orchestra playing:

- Copland – Outdoor Overture
- Schubert – Symphony No 5
- Warlock – Capriol Suite.

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY YOUTH ORCHESTRA			
APPOINTMENT OF STAFF CONDUCTOR			
CANDIDATES CHOICE OF MUSIC			
FOR			
AUDITIONS, 22nd MAY 1971			
1. Roy Heartfield:	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 2nd movement	Warlock: Capriol Suite, No. 5, Mattachine	
2. <u>Edgar Holmes:</u>	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 2nd movement	Warlock: Capriol Suite, No. 1. Basses Dance	
3. Beverley Ingalls:	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 1st, movement	Copland: An Outdoor Overture	
4. Peter Mound:	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 1st movement	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 2nd movement	
or alternative to Schubert	Copland: An Outdoor Overture		
5. John Witham	Schubert: Symphony No. 5, 1st movement	Copland: An Outdoor Overture	

Edgar Holmes (Gary to all of us) was duly appointed and the rest is history. Interestingly, as part of the deal, he was expected to move house to be closer to where the orchestra was based but was given a year's reprieve since he had just settled into a new house on the coast!

Note to: Mr. Cloyne
Copy to: Mr. Tinman
Mr. Fletcher
From: Mr. Gawthorpe 25th May, 1971

Hampshire Youth Orchestra -
Appointment of Staff Conductor

Mr. E.P. Holmes, Music Master at Highcliffe Secondary School, has been appointed Staff Conductor of this orchestra with effect from the 1st September, 1971. The following details have been settled in discussion:

1. The allowance will be a Head of Department Grade C for the initial period, with a prospect of D later.
2. Although ideally the Staff Conductor should be centred on Winchester, Mr. Holmes has only just moved into a house on the coast and I have agreed with him that we shall not ask him to move earlier than September 1972. Will Mr. Fletcher, therefore, please agree with Mr. Wright on the question of travel allowance centre etc., and draft a letter for me covering this aspect.
3. I have reached agreement with the Head of Highcliffe that for the academic year 1971/72 Mr. Holmes will remain at Highcliffe Secondary School on a mornings only basis, thus being free for work in relation to the orchestra during the afternoons and evenings. I should be grateful if Mr. Cloyne would draft a contract for Mr. Holmes covering these points.

Clearly when Mr. Holmes moves to Winchester he cannot remain at Highcliffe Secondary School and some other post will have to be found for him. My immediate thought is that he might become a member of the staff of the new Harestock School due to open in September 1972.

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Gary started rehearsals with HCYO in September 1971 and soon transformed the orchestra into one of the UK's leading youth music ensembles. Bryanston soon followed, and is still going strong, the highlight for any HCYO member, as are the summer tours around the world. However, it is the pastoral culture established by Gary that still matters so much. He understood that the orchestra was not only about music, but about the development of young people and there are so many that owe much to him.

I had the privilege to work with Gary for a relatively short time (a year, perhaps two) and yet, he shaped everything I did in the 30 or so years that followed. As a young teacher I looked up to him, the way he commandeered the room as soon as he came in, the way he would have 100 teenagers eating out of his hand, his amazing ability to know everyone's name and personal stories, his organisational skills, love of music and sheer fun for life!

As Simon Rattle once said 'Gary Holmes- what a great guy!'

Gary's sons Julian and Robert have set up an online tribute where people can leave messages and memories but also give any donations which will go to UNHCR:

<https://garyholmes.muchloved.com/>

Carl Clausen
Ex HCYO Director

I will leave you with some of the many on-line comments from ex-HCYO members which speak volumes:

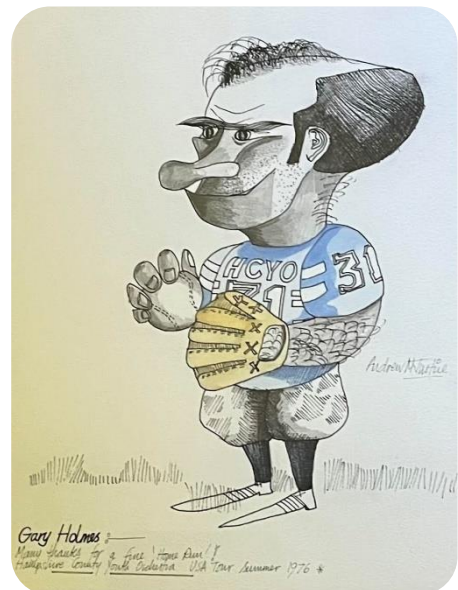
Music education this week lost one of its greatest. Gary's enthusiasm was limitless, as was the unseen energy and tenacity in ensuring continued council funding for the orchestras, a constant battle.

Some of the greatest moments of my life were when playing with HCYO, together with meeting my wife - to simply say "Thank you" seems so inadequate.

Rip Gary, you were the best

He was the biggest musical influence on me throughout my teenage years (and beyond) and an inspirational educator. I was on the fence about pursuing music as a career and it was his advice and encouragement that gave me the nudge I needed. I will always remember that and will forever be grateful for it. Thanks for giving us all a lifelong love of playing our instruments, for the most incredible orchestral experiences, fantastic tours and great chats.

Like so many have posted before, Gary was so influential in my life, enriching it with musical opportunity, direction and encouragement. Always there to lend support, offer guidance and lead by example, he was a powerhouse of energy and enthusiasm. I'll be forever grateful for the opportunities he gave to so many young people. Rest in peace Gary and thank you X



Along with countless others over the years I absolutely lived for the HCYO: those rehearsals every other Saturday, Easter courses at Bryanston and incredible tours (for me Pacific Northwest 1982, New England 1985). The whole experience was due to Gary's incredible dedication, inspiration and enthusiasm and was imbued with a fun yet professional approach that simply was Gary's way. Eternal thanks Gary, great man. RIP.

I am incredibly indebted to him for the fabulous musical experiences and the environment he fostered, which gave me friends for life. Having recently moved back to Hampshire, the ex HCYO bond has shown its huge strength and feels like a warm and welcoming family. Thank you Gary XXX

HCYO was everything to me as a teenager and provided me with lifelong friends and great music making memories. Every time I play something (Rach 2, Shost 5, Bartok Concerto for Orchestra, Brahms 2 in particular) we did in HCYO I think of Gary with such fondness. So lucky to have had him in our lives.

Gary was probably the single biggest musical influence on me in my childhood through those wonderful HCYO years, including those fantastic USA and New Zealand tours. So many musicians - both professional and otherwise - got their inspiration from him, and I'll never forget his enthusiasm and his wide smile. So glad I got to perform with him again at the Reunion a couple of years ago and he was on great form that day.

And finally a few words from Nick Wilks who took over the reins from Gary in 1996:

I was lucky enough to take over the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra from Gary in 1996. He was an extraordinarily difficult act to follow. At my interview I was asked about this formidable challenge: "How do you feel about taking over from someone who can walk on water?" I replied that Gary would be impossible to replace, but that I sensed an enormous generosity in him. And so it proved. Not only was he unfailingly supportive and encouraging, he was remarkably patient with my many administrative failings ("Have you remembered to book space in the aircraft hold for all the instruments you are taking on tour to South Africa?" he asked. I hadn't, and Gary saved my bacon spectacularly on that occasion). His knowledge, empathy and understanding of every single player in the orchestra was astonishing. He saw his task of nurturing young people as something which went far beyond music. Gary was unstinting in the standards he demanded, but for him music was the means by which the individuals in the orchestra grew - it was never purely an end in itself. After I left the orchestra my daughter played horn in HCYO under Carl. The pastoral culture which Gary established was still at the heart of the orchestra, and it was wonderful to experience that legacy as a parent. It isn't possible to adequately express what I and countless others owe to Gary, but perhaps it might be summed up by Simon Rattle with whom I worked shortly after the South Africa tour, and who remembered Gary vividly from when he had conducted HCYO many years ago - "Gary Holmes - what a great guy".