



Chairman's Letter February 2012

Supporting Excellence at Chetham's School of Music

As a firm, and as individuals, Dewhurst Torevell has developed strong links with local organisations which are themselves striving to achieve excellence in what they do. In Manchester we support the City Art Gallery, the Royal Exchange Theatre and perhaps most strongly Chetham's School of Music.

The first two of these are by any standards very good, but in the case of Chetham's School of Music we are fortunate to be associated with what is probably the finest music school in Europe and possibly in the world. I do not exaggerate.

Amongst other things, we have been providing the Dewhurst Torevell Prize at Chetham's for the last 14 years. It is one of the highlights of our year with about 30 guests listening to separate offerings from groups of students. We and our guests vote for the best presentation, providing a cheque to the winners for them to buy something for the school, whilst we enjoy a convivial dinner all in the extraordinary ambience of an original medieval banqueting hall.

Chetham's is of such quality as a school, that a high proportion of the finalists and winners of the last dozen BBC Young Musicians of the Year have come from there. To our delight, many of them have also won the Dewhurst Torevell Prize.

We are enormously proud of our relationship with the school but we also try to learn from this experience how to improve our own business performance.

Chetham's selects its pupils on no other criterion than musical ability. Most of the pupils board and can join the school either from the age of 8 or at any age up to the sixth form which they leave at age 18. During their time, the pupils work extremely hard, not because they are made to but because they want to and are given the opportunity to do so.

Whilst it is the soloist or leader of any ensemble who tends to receive the accolades and recognition of success, these individuals rarely work in isolation and Chetham's works very hard to provide support in a wide variety of ways which brings me to Brenda Blewett and her colleagues.

Any pupils playing instruments or singing will require an accompanist. At Chetham's, a pupil is assigned an accompanist early in their school life and that person wherever possible stays with them throughout their school career. These mentors therefore play an important part in the development of all pupils although they are excellent musicians in their own right. They are also very proud of the impact they have on their pupils.

We were recently privileged to watch Jiafeng Chen perform, a recent pupil of Chetham's and already a world class violinist. He is now studying at the Juilliard School in New York. At this performance, it was mesmerising to watch the dynamic between Brenda Blewett on the piano, and Jiafeng Chen, whom Brenda has accompanied throughout his time at Chetham's. This was a demonstration of the crucial role of an accompanist in music, or a mentor in any business field - in this case showing the wonderful product of guidance, support and inspiration over many years that have been instrumental in this young musician's fulfilment of his full potential. Brenda Blewett is a musician of very high quality, studying at Oxford and the Royal College of Music, now performing across Europe, particularly in Norway as well as having live broadcasts on various radio channels.

It has top level people in Claire Hickman, the headteacher, and Stephen Threlfall, the musical director, but Brenda Blewett, and a number of others like her, are the unsung heroes. These are highly talented, professional people who sometimes are not in the spotlight but they help the students grow and develop, without them there would be less magic.

There are many other equally skilled people involved, I apologise for not naming them and would ask them to accept that my comments on Brenda apply to them all.

Commercially, it is a challenge to see how any company could put all of what could be learned from Chetham's into practice to improve their own company's performance. However, we are always finding parallels and making small changes to how we do business, as we learn from the extraordinary process of specialist music education.

Why do I tell you all of this?

The first reason is that I have the honour to be a Feoffee of Chetham's School and Library and chairman of the Humphrey Chetham Club. The Humphrey Chetham Club aims to establish closer links between businesses and the school, to assist with which we run four or five Meursault, Magic and Fish & Chips lunches in the magnificent medieval hall at the school, where in addition to a reasonable glass of wine we listen to the students play and then join them for a fish & chips lunch. I would like to persuade you to think of coming along to one of these.

The second reason is that I would also like to persuade you that as one of the leading independent wealth management firms, some of the excellence we participate in with Chetham's has rubbed off on us and you may wish to talk to us about your financial affairs.

If you want to know more about Chetham's or if you want to know more about Dewhurst Torevell then send me an email or telephone, telling me which and I will put the appropriate hat on and reply.

Alan Torevell
Chairman

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