

# Benedict Adams

Personal Achievement Award 2018



I would like to thank the Friends of Warwick School for my Personal Achievement Award which has helped a lot with paying for membership of the National Children's Orchestra in 2018.

The National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain gives children aged 7 to 14 the chance to receive high quality training in orchestral playing and performance. Each year a number of full orchestras are formed for each year group from under 10 to under 14, and in October 2017 I was successful in my audition for the Under 10 Orchestra as a percussionist. I was one of five percussionists selected.

As a 2018 NCO member, I have been attending monthly regional orchestra rehearsals in Weston-Super-Mare and Bristol with my older sister Anna. We have been sharing travel arrangements with another local family as their son Charlie (from Hampton Lucy) is a cellist in the under 10 orchestra as well. At the regional rehearsals I also met another under 10 percussionist called Lucas.

The main event for the Under 10 orchestra is always the summer residential course and concert which took place this year at the Port Regis school in Dorset from August 12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>. I had been really excited about this course for quite a few weeks but I was also quite nervous as I drove to Dorset on the Sunday morning with my mum and dad.



Once we had registered we went to find my dormitory. I had been put in the Elizabeth Fry room with 5 other boys - fortunately two of them were Charlie and Lucas. My parents helped me unpack and then left me to get to know my room mates. The other three were all French Horn players, Oliver, Joey and Jacob.

At 3.30pm on that first day we gathered for a full orchestra rehearsal which was nerve-racking but fun – we soon realised how much work we had ahead of us in the week. After tea we had a sectional rehearsal (just percussion) and we met Vicky Lee who was our percussion tutor for the week. She teaches percussion at King's High School as well as at a number of other schools. We ended the day by meeting the social staff who were all really nice and then we watched a film.

*Me with snare drum on my back, after registration.*

On Monday we started the regular daily routine. Cooked breakfast at 8 o'clock was followed by Thought For The Day (a short motivational talk by a different member of the social staff each day). By 9 o'clock we were all in our sectional rehearsals before meeting up for a full orchestra slot at 10am. By 11am we were all ready for our 30 minute break – a chance to run around, play football and grab a biscuit and drink – because we then had another hour of full orchestra before lunch.

The food was really good all week, so we looked forward to our hour long lunch break. By 1.30pm we were back on sectional rehearsals once more but then we got a couple of hours break from

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music. The first hour was always organised by the social staff (we called it “forced fun”), and then we had an hour to amuse ourselves, an opportunity to call home and eat some tuck!

We finished each day with another two hours of full orchestra but with a break for tea in the middle. Finally at 7.30 the social staff took over, giving us hot chocolate and making sure we got ready for bed before allowing us to come back to the common room to watch a bit of a film every night. By then I was definitely ready for bed – but we may have talked a bit after lights out!

During sectional rehearsals we each rehearsed on every bit of percussion equipment (timpani, bass drum, snare, glockenspiel, tubular bells, triangle, cymbals, castanets) and during the course of the week we were each allocated particular parts in the pieces that we would perform in the full orchestra concert.

The routine changed on the final Sunday because we were giving a concert at 11am, which was a chance to show all that we had practised during the week. We had packed all our belongings on the previous night which meant that after breakfast we were ready to go into our final full orchestra rehearsal.

The final concert was fantastic with a large audience of parents, grand parents, brothers and sisters. I was delighted to be chosen as the only percussionist (timpani) in the opening piece, Purcell’s Rondeau from Abdelazer. We performed many short pieces during the concert and besides timps I played bass drum, suspended cymbal, snare, glock, tambourine and castanets.

The castanets were only required in a single piece - Bacchanale by Saint-Saëns. I was selected to play them for this highly rhythmical piece. It was really fun but incredibly hard work with a long and very loud roll to conclude the piece. My fingers hurt by the time I had finished! I played snare in an extract from Star Wars (by John Williams) which was probably my favourite piece and had the glockenspiel solo in Sleeping Beauty by Tchaikovsky. I really loved performing in the concert and it meant the week finished on a real high.

Although I had been really looking forward to the course, I was actually pretty homesick for the first half of the week as it was the first time I had been away for a whole week without my parents or school friends. By the end of the week I had enjoyed myself so much that I didn’t want to leave Port Regis and the good friends I had made.

Thank you again for my Personal Achievement Award.